PROBLEMS IN PRAYER LIFE

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PROBLEMS IN THE PRAYER LIFE

PROBLEMS IN THE PRAYER LIFE

From a Pastor's Question Box

By
JAMES OLIVER BUSWELL, JR., M. A., D. D.
President of Wheaton College, Wheaton, Illinois

"He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him."
—Hebrews 11:6, R. V.

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TO the spirit of Wheaton College, in which I have so recently come to live and to work, this little book is dedicated. I wish to express appreciation of the congenial Christian atmosphere of this place where I have found it easy to think of spiritual things and to put in permanent form these lectures on Prayer, on which I have been working at intervals for more than ten years. My special thanks are due to my wife, whose sympathetic criticism of my chapter on Petition has materially improved it, and to Professor Louis Allen Higley, Ph. D., Sc. D., and to Professor Elsie Storrs Dow, Litt. D., who have read and helpfully criticised my manuscript.

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Problems in the Prayer Life

From a Pastor's Question Box

Introductory

"And it came to pass, as he was praying in a certain place, that when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray." [1]

This petition of the disciple, rising spontaneously from his heart, as he saw Jesus praying, is the desire of our hearts as we approach this study of the prayer life. We truly long for communion with God. "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Jehovah of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of Jehovah; my heart and my flesh cry out unto the living God." [2] "As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?" [3] The fellowship with God which we so earnestly desire, is perfectly exemplified in the prayer life of Christ, in His communion with the Father. He teaches us to expect this same communion in prayer.[4] Lord, teach us to pray!

Definition

Prayer is conversation with God. We speak to Him, and He speaks to us. "In my distress I cried

[1] Luke 11 : 1, R.V.
[2] Psalm 84 : 1, 2, R.V.
[3] Psalm 42 : 1, 2, R.V.
[4] John 17 : 11, 21, R.V.

unto Jehovah, *and he answered me.*" [5] Prayer is not a matter of spiritual gymnastics, exercise of the soul. Prayer is not merely "a low pressure point in the universe," tending to produce its own results. Our conversation with God is reciprocal. God speaks to us while we pray, though we do not always recognize His voice. We ought always to pray with the words of the child Samuel in mind, "Speak; for thy servant heareth." When we pray, we talk with One who hears, who understands, who cares, and who answers!

This conversation with God need not always be in words, but it should never be broken off. It ought to be essentially continuous in its nature. Paul exhorts the Thessalonians to "pray *without ceasing.*" [6] To the Colossians he writes, "*Continue steadfastly* in prayer, watching therein with thanksgiving." [7] He describes the Christian life as "rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; *continuing steadfastly* in prayer." [8] Luke records one of the Lord's parables, given "to the end that men ought *always* to pray, and not to faint." [9] Someone has well said that when one faints one falls back upon nothing, but when one prays one falls back upon God. The continuous nature of prayer may well be illustrated by the conversation of intimate friends. Words are not constantly exchanged, but fellowship is not interrupted. We must not only have regular and frequent times for prayer, but, whenever there is a break in the occupation of our minds, we ought to revert to conscious communion with God just as involuntarily as

[5] Psalm 120:1, R.V.
[6] I Thessalonians 5:17, R.V.
[7] Colossians 4:2, R.V.
[8] Romans 12:12, R.V.
[9] Luke 18:1, R.V.

we should continue in conversation with a friend near at hand.

The implications of our definition of prayer as conversation with God are extremely startling to the modern world. Christian theism is at a low ebb in popular religion. To those who believe that "God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him," [10] there ought to be no difficulty in accepting our definition. We believe that Jesus Christ is "God manifest in the flesh." We believe that He, infinite Deity, by whom the worlds were made, who holds all things in the hollow of His hand, actually stood, in human form before a crowd of men one day, and said, in an audible voice, to all who would hear, "Come unto me"! Believing in the historical Christian view of the person and work of Christ, we can be satisfied with no definition which does not give emphasis to the personal reciprocal relationship in Christian prayer.

Prayer Dependent Upon the Holy Spirit

We are not to understand that man converses with God in a way indicative of insubordination of the human will to the divine. It is historically true that God clothed Himself with human flesh and talked with men in plain human language; it is eternally true that God talks with us in terms which we are able to understand. But, on the other hand, we must fully recognize that the human, just as truly as the divine side of prayer, is entirely dependent upon God. "In him we live, and move, and have our

[10] Hebrews 11 : 6.

being."[11] Prayer which is not guided and controlled by the Holy Spirit of God cannot be called Christian prayer. Jude gives emphasis to this thought: "But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, *praying in the Holy Spirit*, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life."[12] Paul states that our access to God through Christ depends upon the Holy Spirit: "For through him (Christ) we both have our access *in one Spirit* unto the Father."[13] The clearest statement concerning the dependence of our prayer life upon the Holy Spirit, is found in the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans: "And in like manner the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity: for we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered."[14] This text will be discussed at length later on, but now we note the clear statement that "we know not how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us."

Abraham was called "the friend of God,"[15] and "Jehovah spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend."[16] We little realize the greatness of the condescension of God, as we talk with Him in prayer! We should recognize, however, that God's talking with us is like the conversation between a parent and a child in arms. Our very existence is derived from Him. He it is who teaches us to frame the thoughts and form the words of prayer.

[11] Acts 17 : 28, R.V.
[12] Jude 20, 21, R.V.
[13] Ephesians 2 : 18, R.V.
[14] Romans 8 : 26, R.V.
[15] James 2 : 23, R.V.
[16] Exodus 33 : 11, R.V.

Dependent Upon Christ

We must not in any artificial way distinguish the work of the persons of the divine Trinity. There are scriptural distinctions and there is scriptural indication of overlapping of functions. "These three persons are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory." [17] We must remember that the Holy Spirit is God; His part in Christian prayer is God's part. Similarly, when we note the dependence of our prayer life upon the person and work of Christ, we must not think of Him as a "third party," intervening between God and man, but as God incarnate, absolute Deity, co-equal with God the Father from all eternity, becoming man on our behalf.

Not only our prayer life, but our whole status of being in grace, is dependent upon Christ. We were "far off," but now we are "made nigh in the blood of Christ." [18] He is the "great high priest," "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," "in all points tempted like as *we are, yet* without sin." It is wholly due to Him that we have received the invitation to "draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need." [19] The statement of the lost and hopeless condition of men without Christ is not popular in our day. Nevertheless, there is no access to God, hence no prayer, without Christ, "for there is one God, one mediator also

[17] *Westminster Shorter Catechism.*

[18] Ephesians 2:13, R.V.

[19] Hebrews 4:14-16, R.V.

between God and men, *himself* man, Christ Jesus; who gave himself a ransom for all." [20]

Addressed to God the Father

There is much scripture to indicate or suggest prayer directed to the Lord Jesus Christ. Dr. R. A. Torrey says, "One of the most distinctive characteristics of Christians is that they pray to Jesus Christ. They were spoken of in apostolic days as those who called on the name of Jesus.[21] Paul described them as those 'that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.' " [22] Dr. Torrey gives a list of Scripture references indicating prayer addressed to Christ.[23]

Concerning prayer addressed to the Holy Spirit, Dr. Torrey says, "There is no recorded prayer in the Bible to the Holy Spirit, but the communion of the Holy Spirit is spoken of (II Corinthians 13:14). This may imply prayer, but it may mean partaking of the Holy Spirit. (Compare I Corinthians 10:16.) We are dependent upon the Holy Spirit for everything, and so must look to Him, which implies prayer. Yet it is the Father and the Son who give the Holy Spirit (John 14:16, 17; 15:26; Acts 2:33). It would seem, then, that if we wished Him, we should pray to the Father or Son for Him." [24]

The statement is often made that Christian prayer must be indited by the Holy Spirit, offered in the

[20] I Timothy 2:5, 6, R.V.
[21] Acts 9:14-21.
[22] I Corinthians 1:2, R.V.
[23] Acts 7:59; II Corinthians 12:8, 9; Acts 9:9, 10, 13, 14, 17, 20, 21; II Timothy 2:22 and 4:8; Romans 10:9, 12, 13.
[24] See *What the Bible Teaches*, by R. A. Torrey, p. 416 ff.

name of Christ, and addressed to God the Father. The dependence of our prayer upon the Holy Spirit and upon Christ, is invariable. The addressing of prayer to the Father, though frequently indicated, is by no means exclusively taught in the Scriptures. John gives us a general statement on this matter, "If ye shall ask anything of the Father, he will give it you in my name." [25] Many Bible teachers understand the first clause of the Lord's Prayer as teaching that prayer in general should be addressed to the Father: "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father, who art in heaven." [26] But we must be careful not to limit God in His willingness to commune with us. He so planned the universe, before the foundation of the world, that anyone who sincerely seeks Him, finds Him. There is no artificiality in the nature of God, nothing merely arbitrary in our way of approach to Him. He is potentially "our Father in heaven," and seeks through the Son and the Spirit, in the only possible way, to become actually our Father in a real and spiritual sense. We must not think of prayer as we think of approaching an oriental despot. There is no "red tape" about it. He wants us to come. He has provided the way for us to come. He will commune with us, if we come!

[25] See John 16 : 22-27, R.V. [26] Matthew 6 : 9, R.V.

CHAPTER I

CONFESSION

Prayer for Forgiveness

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." [1]

The Issue with Worldly Philosophy

As soon as we speak of confession of sins, we come into conflict with the present day philosophies of the world. The modern evolutionary, pantheistic naturalism joins with Christian Science in denying personal responsibility for moral evil. Christian Science holds that sin is unreal and therefore to be denied or ignored. Other philosophy teaches that sin is only a natural part of the evolutionary process, that, since all of life is mechanically determined through heredity and environment, there is no place for confession and repentance. The Word of God, on the other hand, regards sin as a hideous reality to be confessed and cured by the atonement of Christ.[2] It is not only the philosophies and religions of the world which contradict the Christian view of sin, but the common practice of mankind is inconsistent with it. Missionaries from China tell us that "saving

[1] I John 1:9.

[2] I John 1:9; Numbers 5:6, 7; Leviticus 26:40-42.

face" is the common custom among that people. It is almost impossible to induce one of them to acknowledge a fault of any kind. Some kind of lie or subterfuge must be used to cover up wrong doing. "Saving face" is not confined to China by any manner of means. A frank apology between men and a humble confession before God are rare, indeed.

God Is Holy and Active in Hatred of Sin

The need of confession of sin would be borne in upon our minds if we could only realize the holiness of God. We hear much in our day of the love of God. This chiefest characteristic of Deity can never be overemphasized. We forget, however, that God's love is so great that it is consistently holy. Loving the objects of His care, He must of necessity hate those things that militate against their welfare. "For Jehovah thy God is a devouring fire, a jealous God." [3] "For we know him that said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." [4] Such statements as these are not contradictory of, but are entirely in accord with, the love of God. We cannot love our children if we do not hate those institutions of vice which would ruin their lives. We cannot love our Lord without hating evil. Similarly, since "it is impossible for God to lie" [5] God's love for us necessarily involves His intense and active hatred of sin.

[3] Deuteronomy 4 : 24, R.V.; Hebrews 12 : 29.

[4] Hebrews 10 : 30, 31, R.V.; Deuteronomy 32 : 35, 36.

[5] Hebrews 6 : 18, R.V.

Four great characters in the history of God's dealings with men — Luther, Augustine, Paul, and Isaiah—express their own consciousness of sin in the strongest terms. These were not men of dissolute character. On the contrary, they were conspicuous for their consciousness of the holy presence of God. Isaiah, with his astonishing vision of God in the temple, cried out, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, Jehovah of hosts." [6] It was not until his lips were touched with a coal from the altar that he was able to respond to the call of God for prophetic service. Paul's outcry has been re-echoed in many an honest, godly heart. "Wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?" [7] I have talked with many men who seemed wholly unconscious of their sinful condition. I have always found it useless to argue about their sins before telling them of the holiness and love of God, manifest in Christ Jesus. God is holy. He cannot look upon sin with any degree of allowance.

Man Is Exceedingly Sinful

To the worldly, pantheistic, evolutionary philosophy of the day which denies or excuses sin, our hearts reply in the words of the psalmist: "I know my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me." [8] The statement, "All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God," [9] is not a mere theological abstraction, but a matter of immediate, intuitive knowl-

[6] Isaiah 6 : 5, R.V.
[7] Romans 7 : 24, R.V.
[8] Psalm 51 : 2, 3, R.V.
[9] Romans 3 : 23, R.V.

edge. Sin is a double-headed monster. It ravages and devours from without. We see it all about us. Its fingerprints are in the faces of men; its footprints are in foul institutions all over the land. But sin devours from within, as well as from without. Not only do we discover that there is evil in the world, but we discover that there is hideous evil within us, to which, actually, our hearts consent. It is the saddest day in the life of a man when he discovers that within him is that which responds to the sin which he sees outside. Isaiah's word is not one of abstraction, but of intense feeling, of a desperate situation in one's consciousness, "For we are all become as one that is unclean, and all our righteousnesses are as a polluted garment: and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away." [10] To those who have no consciousness of sin, who even deny sin, we are tempted to reply hotly, "If we say that we have no sin we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." [11] Paul not only calls himself the chief of sinners, but says that the saying is "worthy of *all* acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief." [12] When one feels that he is the chief of sinners, he is in a position where the Saviour can take hold of his life.

Christ Came to Save Sinners Only

There is no room in the Christian life for an attitude of "holier than thou." We, of all people, know

[10] Isaiah 64:6, R.V.
[11] I John 1:3, 10, R.V.
[12] I Timothy 1:15, R.V.

our lack, our insufficiency, our helplessness and our hopelessness. Our glory can never again be in ourselves or in our own righteousness. "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." [13] To those who deny sin in themselves, we have sometimes to reply that Christ did not come into the world to save them, for He said, "I came not to call the righteous (self-righteous), but sinners." [14]

It is not in order here to discuss at length the theory of the atonement. We must accept the fact clearly revealed in the Scripture that God, in Christ, has done all that is necessary for our salvation. "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree." [15] "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin: that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." [16]

All forgiveness, human and divine, is in the very nature of the case vicarious, substitutional. I cannot take time here to develop this thought, but it is, to me, one of the most valuable views my mind has ever entertained. No one ever really forgives another, except he bear the penalty of the other's sin against him. When the state pardons a criminal, society takes upon itself the burden of the criminal's guilt. The human analogy is, of course, imperfect, but all the moral outlines of divine substitutional atonement are present in human forgiveness.

The guilt of one individual's sin against another cannot morally be transferred to a third party.

[13] Galatians 6 : 14.
[14] Matthew 9 : 13, R.V.
[15] I Peter 2 : 24.
[16] II Corinthians 5 : 21.

Moses and Paul prayed that they might become substitutes for Israel, and bear their guilt, but it was morally impossible, for they were third parties in the affair. "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him." [17] When we say that Christ died as our substitute, we do not, in any sense, imply that He was a third party who stepped in between God and man.

The guilt of one individual's sin against another can morally be borne either by the sinner (as in the case of justice without forgiveness, which is un-Christian), or by the one sinned against (as in the case of forgiveness, which is distinctly Christian). Christ was not a third party in the affair at Calvary. He was God, against whom that sin (and every sin in the last analysis) was committed. The issue was sharp, at Calvary, between twelve legions of angels, to compel the ones offending to bear the guilt, and the lone Saviour, the One offended who, in forgiveness, bore the guilt Himself. No voluminous system of theology could comprehend the meaning of the death of Jesus Christ, but in the word "forgiveness" it is more fully comprehended than in any other human formula. When the Son of God, being hung on a gibbet of shame by the sons of men, said, "Father, forgive them," instead of saying, "Angelic hosts, destroy them," He did, in the clearest imaginable way, substitute Himself for the sinners, and bare their sin "in his own body on the tree." What a wonderful Saviour! [18]

We must always emphasize the fact that God has

[17] Psalm 49 : 7.

[18] See *Bulletin of Wheaton College*, May, 1926.

done all that He can do, consistently with His own nature, for the salvation of the lost. Scripture plainly tells us that "it is impossible for God to lie." [19] In forgiving sin by providing a full and adequate atonement for it, God has done all that, without lying, He can do to save sinners. "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to usward, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." [20]

The Value of Confession

The evident value of confession of sin in the economy of God is very plain. Unconfessed sin rankles and destroys fellowship with both God and men. "He that covereth his transgressions shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall obtain mercy." [21] Unconfessed sin is of the darkness, but "if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin." [22] A converted criminal who frankly confesses his past and gives his testimony to the saving power of Christ is much more to be trusted than a reformed man who hides his past. Consider the contrast between the publican and the Pharisee. "The publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner.[23] I tell you, this

[19] Hebrews 6:18, R.V.
[20] II Peter 3:9.
[21] Proverbs 28:13, R.V.
[22] I John 1:7.
[23] There are a few Bible teachers who hold that this prayer, "God be merciful to me, a sinner," should not be used in the present dispensation, in view of the fact that propitiation for our sins is provided in the finished work of Christ. As a

man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." [24]

The question of confessing to men is a perplexing one. We admit no interpretation of Scripture which sets up a certain class of priests as having authority to forgive the sins of others. In Matthew, sixteenth chapter, verse 19, Christ gives the authority of the "keys" to Peter, but in the eighteenth chapter and verse 18 He gives exactly the same authority to the entire group of disciples. In John, twentieth chapter, verses 22 and 23, R. V., He gives this authority to the entire church. "He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit: whose soever sins ye forgive, they are forgiven unto them; whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained." The Lord did not set up a certain class of Christians to forgive the sins of others, but He clearly gave to us all the right and privilege of mediating to one anothers the benefits of His atonement. "He is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world." [25] By evangelistic efforts and by united prayer and fellowship, we bring to one another the benefits of the atonement of Christ, and tell one another of the forgiveness which He freely

matter of fact, however, the propitiation for our sins was finished in the mind of God before the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:4; I Peter 1:19, 20; Revelation 13:8; 17:8). If we are not to pray for anything which God has already provided, we cannot pray at all, for Paul tells us, "All things are yours" (I Corinthians 3:21-23). Prayer for forgiveness has always been the spiritual act by which man asks for, and receives, that which God, in Christ, before the foundation of the world potentially bestowed upon those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life.

[24] Luke 18:13, 14.

[25] I John 2:2, R.V.

offers. We have no authority *within ourselves*, but on the authority of the gospel, we say to all who will believe, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." [26]

With this interpretation of our power to forgive sins, which inheres in our being intrusted with the gospel of grace, we can better understand the clear instruction, "Confess therefore your sins one to another." [27] Christians of mature experience will testify to the value, both to the one confessing, and to the one to whom confession is made, of frank confession of sin.

We must seek guidance from the Lord in the matter of public confession of sin. He has promised to guide us in our other public utterances,[28] and will guide us in this also. An old rhetoric professor of mine once advised the class not to write everything they knew. "Some of the best things you will ever say," he said, "you will say alone to yourselves behind closed doors." I should prefer to say that these things are said alone *to God* behind closed doors. Nevertheless, sincere public confession of sin, when it is not designed for the purpose of personal display, or for the purpose of the indulgence of morbid emotions, certainly has great value for both the individual and the Christian group.

There are difficulties in the way of confession of sin to human beings. The motives of the one confessing may not be sincere and pure, or the trustworthiness of the one to whom confession is made may not be as great as it should be. For these reasons human confessionals often fail to give us

[26] Mark 2:5.
[27] James 5:16, R.V.
[28] Mark 13:7.

help. What a blessing is our assurance that the Saviour knows our motives better than we know them, and that He may be trusted with all the burden of our guilt! The relief of soul which we experience when we have deliberately and entirely opened our sinful hearts to the Lord Jesus Christ, cannot be described to one who has not himself had this experience.

Elements in Confession

Prayer of confession, as the term is used here, includes acknowledging sin, turning from sin, and accepting God's grace.

Acknowledging Sin

The value of acknowledging sin has been discussed above. We must now point out that the acknowledgment of sin is not sufficient to make us right with God. After Achan was clearly known to be guilty of traitorous behavior, he said to Joshua, "Of a truth I have sinned against Jehovah, the God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done. . . . . And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? *Jehovah shall trouble thee this day.*" [29] The repentance of Saul likewise [30] was of no avail. After his disobedience and deceitfulness were found out, he said, "I have sinned; for I have transgressed the commandment of Jehovah, and thy words." Although Samuel finally "turned again after Saul; and Saul worshipped Jehovah," yet, "Samuel came no more to see Saul until the day of his death; for Samuel mourned for Saul;

[29] Joshua 7:19-25, R.V. [30] I Samuel 15:24, R.V.

and Jehovah repented that he had made Saul king over Israel."

I once heard Dr. George Soltau tell of an army officer with whom he had dealt, who acknowledged the existence, and the sovereignty of God, admitted the justice of God's government, knew God's plan of salvation and acknowledged himself to be a sinner and a rebel against God, but deliberately chose the way of death. A Christian physician tells of a young man who had lost one eye through disease, as the result of sin. The physician pleaded with him to accept Christ and forsake his evil ways, and warned him that continuing in sin would result in the loss of the other eye. The young man left the physician's office and went back to his life of sensuality, with the words, "Here goes the other eye!"

Acknowledging sin is not enough. It is necessary in prayer for forgiveness, but it may be accompanied, not by repentance and faith, but by rebellion against God.

One is astonished at the thought of men fighting against God. We read that "the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against Jehovah, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from us."[31] John tells us that he saw "the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war" against the Son of God and against His army.[32] This rebellion is not only an eschatological truth, it is a reality of every day life. It is a sign of the consciousness of sin, and

[31] Psalm 2 : 2, 3, R.V. [32] Revelation 19 : 19.

the acknowledgment of it, at least inwardly, without turning from sin and accepting God's grace.

Turning from Sin

Turning from sin is a necessary part of prayer for forgiveness. "Enter not into the path of the wicked, and walk not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it; turn from it, and pass on." [33] This Old Testament warning is repeated in the New Testament. "Wherefore come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be to you a Father, and ye shall be to me sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." [34]

It is clear, of course, that a lost soul has no power within himself to turn from sin. The world is full of examples of the failure of self-energized righteousness. Many a man has tried to give up vice without the help of Christ, only to fail. Many a man, with the record of many such failures behind him, has at last accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as his personal Saviour, and entered into a life of glorious victory over sin.[35]

We can do nothing of ourselves. Christ must en-

[33] Proverbs 4 : 14, 15, R.V.
[34] II Corinthians 6 : 17, R.V.
[35] The fact that there are morally upright, unsaved persons, and morally weak Christians, is, of course, well-known, and is to be explained by the inequalities of the "handicap race" of life. It is not one's attainments, but the direction in which one is traveling, that counts. The deeds of our hands are accidental, resulting often from environment. The faith in our hearts is fundamental, and will bear fruit unto eternity.

ergize the willing as well as the doing of His good pleasure.[36] When we say that turning from sin is a necessary element in the prayer for forgiveness, by which a sinner comes to God, we are, in fact, only employing the common scriptural mode of speech. The inspired writers commonly refer to the individual as doing that which Christ does through him. The first word of the gospel is "repent." When one turns to Christ, he turns away from sin. The Greek word translated "repent" literally means, "get a new mind." This new mind, with attitudes toward Christ and toward sin exactly reversed, is not an achievement of our own; it is a gift from God. When sinners are commanded to turn from sin, they are, in reality, commanded to yield their wills to that which God stands ready to do within them. This is the meaning of Peter's ringing command on the day of Pentecost, "Repent ye, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ, unto the *remission of your sins;* and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." [37] And on a subsequent occasion, "Repent ye therefore, and *turn again,* that your *sins may be blotted out.*" [38] This is the meaning of Paul's words to the people of Lystra, "We . . . . bring you good tidings, that ye should *turn from these vain things* unto a living God." [39] Paul, before Agrippa, tells of the commission to preach to the Gentiles which he received from the Lord at the time of his conversion on the road to Damascus, ". . . . unto whom I send thee, to open their eyes, that they may *turn from darkness* to light, and *from the power of Satan* unto

[36] Philippians 2:13.
[37] Acts 2:38, R.V.
[38] Acts 3:19, R.V.
[39] Acts 14:15, R.V.

God; that they may receive remission of sins, and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me. Wherefore, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision: but declared both to them of Damascus first, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the country of Judea, and also to the Gentiles, that they should *repent* and turn to God, doing works worthy of repentance." [40]

It is not only the unsaved who have to turn from sin, but God's own people also. The sinfulness of the redeemed on earth is a fact attested both by experience and by revelation. We are not yet made sinless. At the coming of Christ we shall be "like him, for we shall see him, even as he is."

We enter this world as children. There is no way whereby any man may get into this world without being born into it. Even the healthiest of babes has all the faults of immaturity. We have to learn much by precept and by experience. Similarly, there is no way whereby one may enter the household of God without being born into it.[41] We come as little children, with all the faults of spiritual immaturity. So long as we live in the flesh, so long as the old nature is not eradicated, we need the warnings and instructions with which God's Word is filled.

In fact, the passage quoted above, from Paul's letter to the Corinthians, is addressed to Christians,[42] for he refers to them, not as "unbelievers," but as people of "righteousness," and of "light." They belong to "Christ." They are "believers," the "temple of God." They have the "promises" which he quotes

[40] Acts 26:17-20, R.V.
[41] John 3:3.
[42] II Corinthians 6:14, 17, R.V.; 7:1, R.V.

from Isaiah and Hosea. Paul classes himself with them, "Having therefore these promises, beloved, *let us cleanse ourselves* from all defilement of flesh and spirit, *perfecting holiness* in the fear of God." It is clear, of course, that the cleansing of ourselves, the coming out from sin, which Paul enjoins upon the Corinthian Christians, is not possible in the natural energy of the flesh. The "imitation of Christ" is an utter impossibility; we must, as one has said, practice the "appropriation of Christ." Here again the Scripture speaks of us as doing that which Christ does through us.

The epistles of Paul are full of warnings against specific sins, warnings addressed to Christians. One who doubts this statement should reread these epistles, especially the pastorals, not with a prearranged system of water-tight compartments into which the various sentences must be forced, wrongfully dismembering the word of truth, but with a sincere desire to learn simply what the inspired writer says and what he means. The idea that new-born converts need no instruction in the "whys" and "hows" of Christian conduct was certainly not in the mind of the great apostle. Just as in the old dispensation the law was given on the basis of God's grace,[43] so in the new dispensation the warning to *turn from sin*, in no mere general and indefinite terms, is given *on the basis of God's abounding grace, because we are God's people.*[44]

Turning from sin, however, is not enough. In confession, prayer for forgiveness, there must be more

[43] See Exodus 20:1 and Deuteronomy 15:15.

[44] Turning from sin, of course, implies making restitution, in so far as God enables us to do so.

than this. Turning from sin on the part of Judas seems to have been just as sincere as on the part of Peter, for we read, "Then Judas, who betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I have sinned in that I betrayed innocent blood. But they said, What is that to us? see thou to it. And he cast down the pieces of silver into the sanctuary, and departed; and went away and hanged himself." [45] Perhaps nowhere will one find three sentences containing more tragedy and desperation.

Contrast with this concerning Judas, the incident [46] of Peter's conversation with Jesus on the shores of Galilee. Peter's sin is practically as great as that of Judas, but he says, "Lord, thou knowest all things." Peter is doubtless thinking that no one else would believe his profession. He has lost his self respect and the esteem of his fellows. He feels that he can never again testify before those who knew his boast of loyalty and his subsequent denial of the Lord. "Lord, *thou knowest all things, thou knowest* that I love thee!" The emphasis should be on the words "*thou knowest.*" Peter is not now boasting of his loyalty, but, helpless in the consciousness of his own disloyalty, he throws himself on the mercy of the Master he loves, but has denied, "*Lord, thou knowest that I love thee.*"

There is all the contrast that eternity can contain between that man who, in remorse, "went away and hanged himself," and this man who, in repentance,

[45] Matthew 27 : 3-5, R.V. [46] John 21 : 15-17, R.V.

"went out and wept bitterly." [47] Turning from sin is not sufficient.

Accepting God's Grace

The prayer of confession, prayer for forgiveness, as we are here using these terms, includes *accepting* that saving grace of God which is freely and universally offered to mankind. The atonement means to me that forgiveness is absolutely free, and at the same time absolutely righteous. The heart and center of the gospel message is explicitly set forth in John, third chapter, verses 16-21. God loves the world; God sent His Son; if we believe on God's Son, our eternal destiny is established. There can be no doubt about it, for "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." [48] Our salvation does not depend upon a subjective experience, though the experience is an imperishable reality. Our salvation depends upon a promise on the part of God Almighty, a promise often repeated in tangible objective modes, most fully stated by God's Son in the days of His flesh: "*Come unto me,* all ye that labor and are heavy laden, *and I will give you rest.*" [49]

The offer of God's grace is just as clear and simple as it can be. God grant that this thesis on prayer may move some to accept this offer! The story is often told of the blacksmith father who spent long hours at hard labor to earn money to send his spendthrift son through college. At the end of the course the father came with his shabby clothes—the best he

[47] Matthew 26:75.
[48] I John 1:9, R.V.
[49] Matthew 11:28.

had—to surprise his son and see him graduate. But the worthless son avoided his father's glance as he caught sight of him, and turned in another direction with his gay companions. The recounting of such an incident always makes one hot with indignation. But how much more pitiable is the situation when the self-righteous man turns his back upon the presence of the Crucified One, whose scarred hands are outstretched to receive him!

The testimony of those whose sins have been forgiven is the happiest thing in all the world. The following verses from the Psalms are typical: "If thou, Jehovah, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? *But there is forgiveness with thee,* that thou mayest be feared." [50] "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity did I not hide; I said, I will confess my transgression unto Jehovah, and *thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.*" [51]

Conditions to Be Met

In the several divisions of our study of prayer, we shall find that there are conditions to be met. These conditions vary in the different types of prayer discussed. The prayer of confession, prayer for forgiveness, however, could not in the nature of the case be conditional. If there were conditions to be met none of us should be saved: "for by grace have ye been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man should glory." [52] God has made His offer of grace unconditional. Acknowledging sin, turning from sin, and ac-

[50] Psalm 130: 3, 4, R.V.
[51] Psalm 32: 5, R.V.
[52] Ephesians 2: 8, 9, R.V.

cepting the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour, we must merely allow Him to work in us both the willing and the doing of His good pleasure.[53]

Prayer for forgiveness is a necessary prerequisite for all other types of prayer. The only way in which one may come to God is through Jesus Christ; the only way in which one may come to Jesus Christ is as a sinner in need of a Saviour. The prayer of confession is the prayer by which we take our position before God as sinners saved by grace. The sin question must be settled before we can approach God in other types of prayer: "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." [54] "And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood." [55] "Behold, Jehovah's hand is not shortened that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear; but *your iniquities have separated* between you and your God, and *your sins have hid his face* from you, so that he will not hear." [56] "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss that ye may spend it in your pleasures." [57] The Lord will not despise the prayer of "a contrite heart," [58] but sinful prayer will not be heard. Jesus said of those who pray for the purpose of displaying their piety to their fellows, "They have received their reward." [59] James writes of prayer from sinful hearts, "Ye ask and receive not because ye ask amiss, that ye may spend it in your pleasures." [60] The psalmist points out that, in a certain

[53] Philippians 2:13.
[54] Psalm 66:18.
[55] Isaiah 1:15.
[56] Isaiah 59:1, 2, R.V.
[57] James 4:3, R.V.
[58] Psalm 51:17.
[59] Matthew 6:5, 6, R.V.
[60] James 4:3, R.V.

instance of this type of prayer in sin, God "gave them their request, but sent leanness into their soul." [61]

The teaching of the Scripture is very explicit that one cannot expect to be forgiven until he is ready to allow the Saviour to take unforgiveness out of his own heart. The Lord did not teach His disciples to pray, "Forgive us our debts *because* we forgive our debtors," but He did clearly teach that *there is a relationship* between our willingness to forgive and the forgiveness which He freely grants to us. One who does not manifest the forgiving spirit of Christ has never really acknowledged his own sin, turned from it, and accepted the free forgiveness which God offers to him. "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as God also in Christ forgave you." [62] There are two views of forgiveness in the Scripture. From one point of view all sin has already been forgiven, in fact, was forgiven "before the foundation of the world" in the provision of the "Lamb slain." In this sense everyone is already forgiven for all possible sins. From another point of view, however, forgiveness is not realized, does not become actual, until it is accepted by faith. Paul is using the word in the former sense in the passage just quoted from the Epistle to the Ephesians. Jesus uses the word in the latter sense in what we call the "Lord's Prayer" and in His statement, "And whensoever ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have aught against any one: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your

[61] Psalm 106 : 15. [62] Ephesians 4 : 32, R.V.

Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses." [63]

Righteousness is essential to all Christian prayer. James writes, "The supplication of a *righteous* man availeth much in its working." [64] Paul writes to Timothy, "I desire therefore that the men pray in every place, lifting up *holy* hands, without wrath and disputing." [65] We must not forget that this righteousness is not self-righteousness, but righteousness *imputed* unto us by faith in Jesus Christ. Paul prayed that he might be "found in him, not having a righteousness of mine own, even that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith." [66] As a young lad, my music teacher once sent me to a concert given by a great artist. After the concert she inquired which of the pieces I most appreciated. I do not remember them now, but my choice must have been good, for the teacher was pleased and seemed to reckon me worthy of further study. I had no skill of my own, but I had appreciation of that which is fine. This incident may illustrate, in a small way, God's imputation to us of the righteousness of Christ on the basis of our faith. When, acknowledging our sinful condition and turning from our unrighteousness, we accept the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour, God accepts us as righteous in Him and proceeds by His indwelling Spirit to make us righteous in actual fact.

We conclude that there are no prerequisites for the prayer of confession. Forgiveness (unless we reckon the willingness to be forgiven as a condition)

[63] Mark 11 : 25, 26.
[64] James 5 : 16, R.V.
[65] I Timothy 2 : 8, R.V.
[66] Philippians 3 : 9, R.V.

is absolutely unconditional. We see further that confession, prayer for forgiveness, by which we take our position in Christ Jesus as sinners saved by grace, is the essential prerequisite for every other type of prayer.

Special Work of the Holy Spirit

We shall discover in the study of each type of prayer a special work of the Holy Spirit. The special work of the Spirit connected with the prayer of confession is, first, convincing of sin and, second, mediating to us the saving work of Christ. In His great farewell discourse Jesus said, "And he, when he is come, shall *convict the world in respect of sin*, and of righteousness, and of judgment."[67] In His conversation with Nicodemus Jesus said, "Except a man be born of water and of *the Spirit*, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."[68] One would scarcely dare continue in the gospel ministry if he could not depend upon the promise of the presence of the Holy Spirit to make his preaching of the gospel effective. I should not dare to stand in the pulpit and declare the truth of God to the people, were I not confident that the Holy Spirit will strive to convince and convert those who hear.

Conclusion

Finally, let me urge those who have never accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour and Lord, to do so without delay. "Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation."[69] "Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."[70] There is a grave danger that we may

[67] John 16:8, R.V.
[68] John 3:5.
[69] II Corinthians 6:2, R.V.
[70] Hebrews 3:15.

drift past the opportunity of salvation,[71] into that condition which Jesus described as "eternal sin." [72] There is a very solemn warning in the Scripture [73] concerning those who, standing, as it were, in the very doorway of salvation, with full knowledge of the blessedness of the saved with whom they associate, turn their backs and walk out into the dark. Their condition is not described in terms of arbitrariness on the part of God, but in terms of their own permanent hardness of heart. "It is *impossible to renew them again unto repentance.*" One who is truly sorry for his sin, has surely not committed an unpardonable sin. The scriptural warning is that one may drift into a condition of sin from which he *will never repent.* My testimony as a pastor, and as an army chaplain, is that, though one may be saved in his last moment of life, men usually die as they have lived.[74] Bible teachers frequently point out that there were two thieves on the cross. One was saved, that none might despair; but one was lost, that none might presume!

"We have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need." [75]

"Just as I am, without one plea,
But that Thy blood was shed for me,
And that Thou bid'st me come to Thee,
O Lamb of God, I come!"

[71] Hebrews 2:1-3.
[72] Mark 3:29.
[73] Hebrews 6:4-6.
[74] See my article on "Eternal Punishment," in the *Bibliotheca Sacra*, October, 1925.
[75] Hebrews 4:15, 16, R.V.

CHAPTER II

CONSULTATION

Prayer for Guidance

"If any of you lacketh wisdom, let him ask of God, who giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not; and *it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith*, nothing doubting: for he that doubteth is like the surge of the sea, driven by the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord; a doubleminded man, unstable in all his ways." [1]

Need of Guidance

Any one who has lived at all intensely, and thought at all deeply, realizes his need of supernatural guidance. A few years ago a great movement was started among the Protestant churches. As a pastor, not knowing the ultimate issues of the movement, I did the best I could to cooperate. I attended many meetings of committees and many larger gatherings. I was frequently assured by those in control that the plans were bound to succeed because they had been approved by a strong organization of extremely capable lawyers in New York City. My experience, of course, is not entirely typical; but my testimony is that, in no meeting of this entire program which I attended was prayer offered, or reliance upon God, and waiting upon Him for His plans, mentioned.

[1] James 1:5-8, R.V.

After a time the movement collapsed and left the Protestant denominations heavily burdened with debt. Although I am not in a position to pass judgment upon these events, my strong opinion is that the movement failed, not because it was not well planned, but because the leaders did not realize their need of divine guidance. Every earnest pastor will testify that a very poor plan may succeed if God adds His blessing and His wisdom; but the best of plans will fail if the Spirit of God is not moving in the hearts and minds of those responsible for the work.

It is a pitiful thing to find persons so spiritually blind that they do not know their need of light. The "Light of the World" is available for them, but they know not that they are in darkness. They even lead other blind folk, and "fall into the ditch." [2] It is those who know God best who are most conscious of their need of guidance. Saul, going his headstrong way, was brought up short by a blinding, overpowering vision of the risen, glorified Christ. His human wit was great, but it would not suffice for such a circumstance. After his question, "Who art thou, Lord?" was answered, he asked, "What shall I do, Lord?" and this question was answered also.[3] God's promise to Moses was, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest." But Moses said, "If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence!" [4]

"Guide me, O Thou great Jehovah,
Pilgrim through this barren land;
I am weak, but Thou art mighty;
Hold me with Thy powerful hand."

[2] Matthew 15:14.
[3] Acts 22:8-10.
[4] Exodus 33:14, 15.

Promises of Guidance

God meets every need of our nature in His infinite providence. Our great need of guidance is met by the promises of His Word, and by their fulfillment in Christian experience. Isaiah's prophecy has meant much to many of God's people: "And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be hidden any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers, and thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it; when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." [5] What could be more reassuring than the words of the text at the head of this chapter? "If any of you lacketh wisdom, *let him ask of God, ... and it shall be given him.*" [6]

Examples of Guidance

The Scriptures are full of examples of the fulfilling of the promises given above. The pillar of cloud and of fire which guided Israel; the fleece of wool by which God, with marvelous condescension and accommodation, guided Gideon; the "heavenly vision" by which Paul was converted, and the "Macedonian call" by which Paul was led to carry the gospel into Europe: all these show God's immediate supervision over, and guidance of His servants. This supernatural activity of the Lord did not cease, nor did the promises cease, with the close of the sacred canon. Luther was divinely guided when God put into his heart the great principle of the Reformation, "Justi-

[5] Isaiah 30:20, 21, R.V. [6] James 1:5, R.V.

fication by faith." A multitude of the Lord's servants could testify of the leading of the Holy Spirit, the guidance of God in experiences just as remarkable as those recorded in the Bible.

Guidance from God does not always come by supernatural revelation, though at times it certainly comes in such a manner. Ordinarily there are three factors to be reckoned with: The Bible, the Holy Spirit in our consciousness, and the outward circumstances. I am told that a passenger on a ship on Lake Michigan, permitted to stand one night on the bridge beside the captain as the ship was coming into Milwaukee, asked how the captain knew when to turn the ship so as to pass the end of the break-water, and sail straight into the mouth of the river. The captain pointed out three lights on the shore, and said, "When those three lights come into line, so that they appear as one, we turn directly toward them, and, keeping in line with them, we steam straight into the mouth of the river." So it is with these three lights in the spiritual world. Truly the "word is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path"; [7] the Holy Spirit within us, the "inner light"; and the providential shaping of our circumstances without—when we see these three lights in line, then our pathway is perfectly clear.

We have no right to wait for, or insist upon, a miraculous revelation, when God's will is perfectly plain. Paul was seldom guided by visions. The ordinary rule has well been stated, "Pray it through, then go ahead." Perhaps the following jingle may not be out of place:

[7] Psalm 119:105.

"The man who once most wisely said,
'Be sure you're right, then go ahead,'
Might well have added this, to wit,
'Be sure you're wrong before you quit.'"

There are many young people waiting for a "call" to the gospel ministry, who were called long ago, but did not hear. I cannot identify the author of the following statement, but its inevitable logic grips the soul: "While vast continents are lying in the darkness of heathenism or of Islam, the burden of proof rests upon you to prove that God intended your circumstances to keep you out of the foreign mission field." When I was a small lad, an old mathematics professor took charge of our Sunday-school for two successive Sundays. The first Sunday he wrote upon the black board an algebraic formula, "A + O = R," and asked us to fill in the unknown quantities during the following week. When the next Sunday came, no one had solved the problem. The professor therefore wrote out the equation again, filling in the values of the letters: "*Ability* plus *Opportunity* equals *Responsibility*." The lesson has never departed from my mind.

"I ask no dream, no prophet ecstasy,
No sudden rending of the veil of clay,
No angel visitant, no opening sky;
But *take the dimness of my soul away.*"

The following statement of George Müller's, "How I Ascertain the Will of God," has been of help to so many of God's people that I shall quote it in full. It is published in tract form by The Bible Institute Colportage Association of Chicago:

"1. I seek at the beginning to get my heart into such a state that it has no will of its own in regard to a given matter.

"Nine-tenths of the trouble with people is just here. Nine-tenths of the difficulties are overcome when our hearts are ready to do the Lord's will, whatever it may be. When one is truly in this state, it is usually but a little way to the knowledge of what His will is.

"2. Having done this, I do not leave the result to feeling or simple impression. If I do so, I make myself liable to great delusions.

"3. I seek the will of the Spirit of God through, or in connection with, the Word of God.

"The Spirit and the Word must be combined. If I look to the Spirit alone without the Word, I lay myself open to great delusions also. If the Holy Ghost guides us at all, He will do it according to the Scriptures and never contrary to them.

"4. Next I take into account providential circumstances. These often plainly indicate God's will in connection with His Word and Spirit.

"5. I ask God in prayer to reveal His will to me aright.

"6. Thus, through prayer to God, the study of the Word, and reflection, I come to a deliberate judgment, according to the best of my ability and knowledge, and if my mind is thus at peace, and continues so after two or three more petitions, I proceed accordingly.

"In trivial matters, and in transactions involving most important issues, I have found this method always effective."

Conditions to Be Met

In order to pray effectively for guidance one must have the essential prerequisite for all approach to God, namely, a cleansed heart. Scripture indicating this requirement is given in the chapter on confession, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."[8] In order to approach God for any purpose one must come first of all as a sinner in need of a Saviour. We must acknowledge our sin, turn from it, and accept the grace of God. It were perfectly futile to try to cleanse ourselves, or clothe ourselves with righteousness for the court of the Lord; but, "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."[9] The first essential prerequisite for all types of prayer, including the type now under discussion, is prayer for forgiveness, by which we take our position in Christ as sinners saved by grace.

The second prerequisite for prayer for guidance is faith. This requirement is especially emphasized in the text which is given at the head of this chapter. The promise of wisdom is followed by the words "*but let him ask in faith,* nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways."[10] Faith, in fact, is a general prerequisite for all types of prayer, "without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is,

[8] Psalm 66:18.
[9] I John 1:9.
[10] James 1:5-8.

and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." [11]

It is necessary to correct popular Christian ideas on the subject of faith, at two points. In the first place, the answers to our prayers depend not upon the *strength* of our faith, but upon the *fact* of our faith. The father of the paralytic [12] boy was able only to say, "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief," but Jesus accepted this faith, and restored the boy whole to his father. It was the *fact* that the father had faith *in Christ*, not the strength of his faith, which saved the boy. The Scripture frequently indicates faith as the one necessary factor in attaining an object: "For by grace are ye saved *through faith; and that not of yourselves;* it is the gift of God." [13] "Go thy way; thy faith hath made thee whole." [14] In the first of these passages we surely recognize that it is not the strength of our faith which saved us, but the *fact* of our *faith in Christ*. In the second reference also, it is not the strength of the blind man's faith, but the fact that he trusts in Christ, which brings light to his eyes. So it is in the prayer for guidance. The feeblest faith, crying, "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief," brings light to our blinded minds.

Christian people generally need also the warning that it is not the *subject* of our faith but the *object* which brings the answer to prayer. Many have confused credulity with faith and have tried to make themselves believe that their petition is sure to be granted. The question of assurance of the answer

[11] Hebrews 11 : 6.
[12] Mark 9 : 24.
[13] Ephesians 2 : 8.
[14] Mark 10 : 52.

will be discussed with the subject of "Petition." We must say now, however, that it is very wrong for us to try to work up within ourselves belief in the *subject* of our prayer. Christians must frequently say, "We are perfectly confident of God's power, but we are not informed as to His plan." God Almighty is the *object* of our faith; it is He, and not we, who answers prayer.

The great emphasis upon faith in the text at the heading of this chapter is a puzzle at first thought. Why should faith be so very necessary in prayer for guidance? Upon reflection it appears that *guidance from God almost universally requires action on the part of man.* Faith in seeking God's wisdom is closely allied with faith in dedicating ourselves [15] to God's service. Faith for understanding cannot be divorced from faith for activity. The following reference clearly indicates this fact: "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from myself." [16] Here we see that faith *to do* precedes faith *to understand.* This special need of faith, in prayer for guidance is illustrated by the account of Abraham, in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews: "By faith, Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went." [17]

Surely it is a very significant thing to ask God for guidance. All that faith implies of trustfulness and yieldedness of will is required.

[15] See Chapter VII.
[16] John 7:17, R.V.
[17] Hebrews 11:8.

"My faith looks up to Thee,
Thou Lamb of Calvary,
Saviour divine!
Now hear me while I pray,
Take all my guilt away;
O let me from this day
Be wholly Thine!"

Special Work of the Holy Spirit

We say, in the discussion of confession, that the special work of the Holy Spirit for that type of prayer is His convicting us of sin and His regenerating us in Christ. In the type of prayer now under discussion we discover that the special work of the Holy Spirit is Himself to answer our prayer for guidance. Very little comment is needed upon the following passages of Scripture: "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth; for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak; and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me; for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you." [18] "But, as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." [19] "But the Comforter, which is

[18] John 16:12-15. [19] I Corinthians 2:9, 10.

the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you."[20] Every earnest Christian will testify of the joy and strength these passages of Scripture have brought to him. How often do we have to seek a special manifestation of the presence of Him who "will guide us into all truth," will "show us things to come," will "take of the things of Christ and show them unto us," will "teach us all things and call all things to our remembrance"!

The Problem

Men of this mechanistic age are asking, "Will God actually reveal His will and His plan to His people?" I once talked with a student in a theological seminary about the messianic prophecy in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah. He declared to me that the chapter could not refer to Jesus Christ. It referred to Israel, he said. Israel is the servant of Jehovah. I tried to point out that since "all *we* like sheep have gone astray; *we* have turned everyone to his own way" refers of course to Israel, "He" on whom "the iniquities of *us* all" are laid must be some one *other than Israel.* This is true if the rules of grammar and syntax have any meaning. I then pointed out that the portrait of Jesus Christ in this chapter corresponds exactly with His person in the days of His flesh, and that by every rule of logic we must accept this chapter as a prophecy of Christ. The student finally replied, "But it could not refer to Christ; *God cannot speak to us plainly like that.*" This re-

[20] John 14:26.

mark of the student illustrates a tendency in modern thinking. The facts *must* be explained some other way. The thought of God really guiding His people, and revealing His will and His plan to them, is intolerable to modern, worldly-minded men. The answer to the problem is simply that God has promised in His Word, and has fulfilled His promise in our own experience.

One morning, just before sunrise, I climbed to a perch in the tops of some tall trees on the eastern shore of the lake. Behind me was a high hill, so that the sun itself was not visible as it rose. I looked westward over lake and island and saw the signs of the dawning day. The light of the sun would have blinded my eyes had I been able to see it, but the effect of the light was very plain in the changes which took place before me. The tops of the trees grew bright, and then the shadows below began to clear. Smoke arose from the chimneys and men began to come forth from their homes. Everywhere, in all the landscape, there was unmistakable evidence that dawn had come.

God gives us, in the time of prayer, the opportunity of seeing the effects of His providence in our lives. His hand is not always visible; but as we survey our past pathway we are convinced, by overwhelming evidence, that He has guided us every step of the way. To the Christian who has walked with the Lord for any length of time, the doubting of God's guidance is really not intelligible. There are so many cases in which the Word, the Spirit, and the circumstances have led us into undreamed-of usefulness and happiness, there are so many cases where

the evidence of His providential care is so plain, that we cannot doubt. Our testimony is an "Ebenezer," "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." [21]

"He leadeth me! O blessed thought!
O words with heavenly comfort fraught!
Whate'er I do, where'er I be,
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me."

Submission to God's Guidance

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, the life of our Lord Jesus Christ is summarized in the words, "Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God." [22] When the Lord of glory came to earth and took upon Himself the life and circumstances, the limitations and temptations of humanity, He submitted Himself completely to the will of God the Father. His whole testimony of Himself, as recorded in the Gospel according to John, gives evidence of His voluntary humiliation: "The words that I say unto you I speak not from myself: but the Father abiding in me doeth his works." [23] His prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane was, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done." [24] Surely if the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, co-equal with the Father, when He took upon Himself the circumstances of humanity, so strongly revealed to us submission to the Father's will, it behooves us to be more earnest than heretofore in our seeking for, and submitting to, the guidance of the Lord. This type of prayer is much neglected among the Lord's people. We

[21] I Samuel 7:12.
[22] Hebrews 10:7.
[23] John 14:10, R.V.
[24] Luke 22:42.

pray for material things (as we should), but we forget to seek for wisdom. As a young and inexperienced chaplain in the army I had once to be told by a corporal, "Well, Chaplain, there is one thing you must learn in this man's army, and that is: Wait for orders." I shall never forget that lesson. I did not have to be told twice. Surely we have much to learn in the army of the Lord. "Wait for orders"!

I builded my house in beauty, I thought;
I furnitured all within
With the pride of my soul in my handiwork,
Then bade my Lord come in.

How quickly He came to my threshold then,
My Lord, in sad surprise,
The Carpenter, Builder, Architect,
With wonder in His eyes!

"But here is the plan for your house," He said,
"Tenfold more wondrous fair!
Not to be builded by your hands alone,
With mixing of mortar and hewing of stone.
Give me your plan. Rebuild with my own;
Your labors I must share."

CHAPTER III

PETITION

Prayer for Concrete Things

"Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." [1]

"Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." [2]

Asking God for Things

There are those who object to petition as a part of the devotional life. They sometimes argue that it is crass, materialistic, and selfish, and that it represents God on too low a plane. We hold, on the contrary, that all the values of personal relationship have their temporal aspect, but are not lessened thereby. Motherhood is more than the feeding of children, but motherhood without the feeding of children would be criminal. Fatherhood is more than earning a living for a family, but "if any provideth not for . . . . his own household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever." [3] If God has created a material universe, it is not beneath His dignity to provide for the specific wants of His crea-

[1] Philippians 4 : 6.
[2] John 14 : 13, 14.
[3] I Timothy 5 : 8, R.V.

tures, and it is not out of keeping with our worship of Him, to petition Him with regard to these wants.[4]

Conditions to Be Met

Every type of prayer except confession is conditional. God has not turned over to us the managing of the universe, in promising to answer prayer. Someone has said that, as a boy, he gave up his faith in prayer, because he asked God to turn a brick into gold, so that his poor mother might have plenty of money, and God did not do it. One is grieved at such lack of understanding of the Christian doctrine of prayer. God has never promised to do "just any-

[4] I am indebted to Professor Elsie Storrs Dow, M.A., Litt.D., head of the Department of English Literature, of Wheaton College, for the following note:

In the August number of the *Atlantic Monthly*, 1924, there are two articles on Prayer: the first by Kirsopp Lake, Winn Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Harvard, who tells us that "prayer means petition, communion, aspiration, and confession" or "self-examination," as he elsewhere defines "confession." "In the public worship of the churches," he goes on to say, "petition has always been put in the first place, for it is historically the most prominent. Nevertheless, few educated men believe in its efficacy. The laws of life—which is the will of God—are not changed by prayer, sacrifice, or fasting." He naturally reaches this conclusion: "I do not believe that the religion of tomorrow will have any more place for petition than for any other form of magic."

Immediately following this paper is the second treatment of the theme, under the title, "The Soul's Sincere Desire," by Glenn Clark, Professor of English at Macalaster College.

Professor Clark begins, "I do not know why God should have blessed me for the past two years with an almost continuous stream of answers to prayer. Some of the answers were marvelous, many unexplainable, all of them joy-giving." I have yet to learn that Kirsopp Lake's learned and up-to-date views as here expounded produced a ripple of excitement. Of Professor Clark's article, on the contrary, the *Atlantic* declares that the "interest in this paper was so tremendous that the entire edition of the magazine was sold at once and we received hundreds of requests to reprint it."

Apparently it is welcome news to many *Atlantic* readers that our Father in heaven, in spite of the "laws of life—which is the will of God," has not willed to leave Himself so much more helpless than mere human fathers that He cannot heed His children's cry for help, nor find a way, in His well-ordered household, to grant their right desires.

thing" we ask Him to do, regardless of His providence and His discipline. There are conditions to be met.

In the Name of Christ

The most striking promise in the Scriptures contains the most comprehensive condition, "If ye shall ask anything *in my name*, I will do it." The reader will find the article on "Name," by W. L. Walker, in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopædia*, very illuminating in this connection. There is there some valuable material on the subject of the name of Jehovah and of the Lord Jesus Christ, which we cannot discuss here. Walker says, " 'In the name of' means 'as representing' (or as being); for example, 'in the name of the prophet,' of 'a righteous man,' or of 'a disciple';[5] to receive a little child 'in Christ's name'; that is, as belonging to Him, is to receive Himself."[6] He further points out the Greek of Mark 9:41, "For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink *in name that* ye are Christ's, verily I say unto you he shall in no wise lose his reward."[7] And he remarks, "To pray in the name of Jesus, to ask anything in His name, according to His promises, ... is not merely to add to our prayers (as is so often unthinkingly done), 'we ask all in the name of Jesus,' or, 'through Jesus Christ our Lord,' etc.; but to pray, or ask, as His representatives on earth, in His mission and stead, in His Spirit and with His aim, it implies union with Christ and abiding in Him, He in us and we in Him. The meaning of the phrase

[5] See John 14:13, 14; 15:16 and 16:23-27.

[6] Matthew 10:41, 42.

[7] Matthew 18:5; Mark 9:37.

is, 'as being one with me, even as I am revealed to you.' Its two correlatives are 'in me,' [8] and the Pauline 'in Christ.' " [9]

We shall see, as we proceed, that every other condition to be met, in any type of prayer, is implied in this condition, that prayer must be offered in the name of Christ.

Subject to His Will

We are given this condition, subjection to the will of God, in the first Epistle of John: [10] "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything *according to his* will, he heareth us; and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him." The example of our Lord Jesus Christ, in His prayer in Gethsemane, also indicates that all Christian prayer must comply with this condition: "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; *nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done.*" [11]

Praying in the name of Christ implies subjection to the will of God. We surely cannot be Christ's representatives, acting in Christ's spirit, and for Christ's purpose unless we imply in our very act of coming to God in prayer the same attitude toward the will of God which Christ manifested in Gethsemane. The fact that we are Christians implies that our primary desire is for God's will to be done.

There are some who teach that this submission to the will of God in petition, or, as they call it, the "if" in Christian prayer, indicates a lack of faith. They

[8] John 6:56; 14:20; 15:4ff; 16:33; cf. I John 5:20.
[9] II Corinthians 5:17.
[10] I John 5:14, 15.
[11] Luke 22:44.

teach that men should pray for the things which they desire without saying, "If it be God's will." It seems to me that this attitude of mind is caused by a false conception of faith. We have pointed out above that faith is not credulity. It is the *object* of our faith, not the *subject* of our faith, our own desire, which brings the answer to prayer. It is the *fact* of our faith in God, not the *strength* of our faith in our own desires, which the Scripture everywhere emphasizes. Unless God has miraculously revealed His purpose to us, or clearly and definitely stated it in His Word, we have *no right* to pray for anything without saying, or implying, "Thy will, not mine, be done." [12]

According to His Word

One of the Lord's promises is, "If ye abide in me and *my words abide in you*, ye shall ask what ye

[12] Prayer for healing, based on James 5:13-18 and other Scriptures, is much emphasized in our times, and rightly so. Nevertheless, we are grieved to find, in the minds of many, a distorted view of what the Scripture teaches on the subject. We must say (1) that prayer for healing must be as truly subject to the thought, "Thy will, not mine, be done," as any other petition. The words "the prayer of faith shall save him that is sick" cannot possibly mean that with any kind, or degree, of faith we shall never be ill, for the Scripture plainly states that "it is appointed unto men once to die" (Heb. 9:27). (2) Prayer for healing ought to be regarded on the same basis with prayer for food, or clothing, or other physical wants. We believe that God miraculously feeds and clothes His children in accordance with His will. Nevertheless, God would not honor our starving or going naked, demanding that He care for us by supernatural action. In all these cases we must use the natural means God has given us, with faith and with thanksgiving. (3) There are several interpretations of the words "anointing him (the sick man) with oil in the name of the Lord." (a) Some hold that this Scripture dispensationally refers to the Jews and not to Christians. The writer cannot agree with this view since the Epistle of James was written (see chapter five, verse 7) to those who were watching for the Lord's return. Surely this must refer only to Christians. (b) Others believe that anointing with oil is more or less like a sacrament, and that the use of oil in healing typifies the fact that the Holy Spirit has come upon the

will and it shall be done unto you." [13] Abiding in God's Word is a very significant thing. We should ask ourselves what abiding means. We do not abide necessarily in the room in which we happen to live. Our abode may not be the place in which we spend the greatest number of our hours. Our abiding place is the center of our hearts' affections, the center of our ambitions and interests, the place where we are at home. If we "abide in him and his word abides in us," we shall then be praying in His name and subject to His will. Sometimes God's Word is not at home in our hearts. Scripture quotations come forth from our lips with the awkwardness and unfamiliarity of a person who is not at home in his surroundings. God's will is revealed in His Word for our guidance. Surely we should give earnest heed, lest our prayer should be contrary to His written Word.

The Scripture gives us several rather startling indications of the will of God for our prayers. For instance, Jeremiah was told, "Therefore pray not thou for this people, neither lift up cry nor prayer for them, neither make intercession to me; for I will not hear thee." [14] Israel had rebelled against God, was not repentant, and must suffer disciplinary experiences before the people could be restored to God's favor. John writes, "If any man see his brother sinning a sin not unto death, he shall ask, and God

body of Christ. Many Christians are blessed in this belief. (c) The most probable explanation is that James, inspired by the Holy Spirit, regarded oil as medicine (see Luke 10:34). Oil here has no symbolical or sacramental meaning, but is to be taken literally. Anointing with oil would naturally reduce a fever and relieve suffering. The modern analogy of anointing with oil would be using the best medical means now available.

[13] John 15:7.

[14] Jeremiah 7:16.

will give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: not concerning this do I say that he should make request." [15] In this connection we should study the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, "I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou has given me; for they are thine." [16] "I pray not that thou shouldest take them from the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil one." [17] These passages of Scripture clearly indicate that our prayer, no matter how intense it may be, cannot change the essential nature of right and wrong, nor take away the freedom of the rebellious, nor compel men to accept the grace of God contrary to their will. If God lays it upon our hearts to pray for the salvation of individuals we must trust that He who guides us so to pray knows that the prayer will eventually be answered. However, knowing the plan of God to leave the individual soul free to accept or reject divine grace, we have no right to feel that God's promise has failed when the unsaved continue in their rebellion. That some will ultimately continue to hate God is a fact of revelation, a fact of experience, and a fact also which is necessary to explain God's dealings with the human race.

Another illustration of the need of guidance from the written Word, is found in Paul's exhortation to the churches of Galatia "that through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of God." [18] One might naturally suppose that he could sincerely pray in the name of Christ that Christians might be

[15] I John 5:16, R.V.
[16] John 17:9, R.V.
[17] John 17:15, R.V.
[18] Acts 14:22, R.V.

delivered out of all difficulties in the present life. One in whom God's Word abides will know that such a prayer is not in accordance with the will of God and the necessities of the process of our development in grace.

A Cleansed Heart

"If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." [19] In our two preceding chapters we have developed the thought that a cleansed heart is necessary for our approach to the throne of God. In the first place, an unsaved individual must get right with God through Jesus Christ; further, a Christian must constantly live in the attitude of the acknowledgment of his need of divine grace, and must constantly claim the benefits of the atonement of Christ for himself. As has been said above, we do not stand before God in our own righteousness as though we had achieved anything, but we come depending completely upon the righteousness of Christ imputed unto us by faith. "Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him." [20] We cannot expect God to grant our petitions unless we have been cleansed by the blood of Christ.

Faith

There are two aspects of faith which have to do with petition. The first is trust in God, and the second is the assurance of the answer of our prayer. We have discussed the former aspect in the preceding chapters. When Jesus said to the woman who

[19] Psalm 66:18.

[20] II Corinthians 5:21, R.V.

touched the hem of His garment, "Thy faith hath made thee whole," [21] He was not implying that she, by her strength of faith, forcefully assuring herself that she would certainly be made whole, had effected her own cure. The faith of this poor woman was simply the *variable factor* in the situation. The will of God to bless is constant. Human need and suffering and sinfulness are always to be found. Faith is the factor lacking in our lives, preventing God from satisfying our need. Closing an electric switch turns on the light. Yet we know that it is not the switch which gives the light. The switch is the one point at which there is a break in the circuit. Closing the circuit at this point allows the light to shine. Similarly, it is not our faith which produces answers to prayer; God's power alone can accomplish that end. Faith is the act of will by which we allow God to bless us.

Another aspect of faith is indicated in the conversation between Christ and the apostles on the occasion of the drying up of the fig tree which Jesus had cursed. "And Peter, calling to remembrance, saith unto him, Master, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away! And Jesus, answering, said unto them, Have faith in God. For verily I say unto you, that whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass, he shall have whatsoever he saith. Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." [22] This passage of Scripture seems to con-

[21] Matthew 9:21, 22. [22] Mark 11:20-24.

tradict what we have said above about faith. We have here a clear indication of faith in the *subject* of our prayers. Some have understood from this passage that we ought to try to make ourselves believe that the thing we desire is sure to come to pass. I know of an instance in which godly people sent telegrams to others asking prayer for the recovery of one who was ill. In these telegrams the senders mentioned only the more favorable symptoms in order to stimulate faith in those who would be praying at a distance. I am personally acquainted with many very earnest Christians who understand faith after this manner. Let us fairly ask ourselves the question, Does this text warrant our attempting to work up credulity in order to assure answers to prayer?

In the first place, we must say that this text has to do with faith *in God*. The first words of Christ here are, "Have faith *in God*." We are to have *faith in Him, not faith in our faith!* Faith in our own faith accomplishes nothing but our own undoing. Faith in God saves.

In the second place, we must study the testimony of godly people for whom this text has been fulfilled. I am told by several very devout persons that at certain times in their lives God has given them strong assurance of the granting of their petitions. These persons are very careful to point out that the assurance is not the product of their own psychology, but a gift from God to be received with thanksgiving.

In the third place, this aspect of faith must be understood in the light of the work of the Holy Spirit, in revealing to us the will of God. It is He who will "take of the things of Christ and show them unto

us" and "will bring all things to our remembrance" and "will guide us into all the truth." Assurance that those things which we ask shall come to pass will be given us of the Holy Spirit when God sees fit to grant us this special gift. At other times we have simply to say we know God's power, we trust His wisdom, but we are not informed as to His plan.

In the fourth place, when one prays according to the promises of God, he may have absolute assurance of the answer of his prayer. Jesus said, "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out." [23] "Come unto me . . . . and I will give you rest." [24] "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." [25] When we pray in accordance with these passages we may have absolute and unconditional assurance that our prayer will be answered, our petition granted.

Agreement with Others

This is one of the most beautiful requirements in Christian prayer. The Lord said, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

Since Jesus is here talking to His own disciples, it is understood that this promise is conditioned, just as all others are, upon prayer being offered in His name and subject to His will.

Some of our Christian brothers treat this promise

[23] John 6:37.
[24] Matthew 11:28.
[25] John 10:9.

as though God were more ready to answer several of His children than to answer one. Some books on prayer almost imply that God must be begged to bless His children. Some seem to suggest that a tremendous amount of human energy must be put into prayer and that we must unite in order to increase this energy in petition. It would seem, however, that agreement with others is enjoined upon us, not that God may be persuaded to bless, but in order that we may pray more deeply and more truly. When we come together to pray, the uniting of our minds before the throne of grace eliminates much of selfishness and illuminates the darkness of our souls. God is ready to bless one alone, and many of the promises may be claimed by an individual in the desert, away from all human companionships. United prayer, however, is more likely to be true Christian prayer, subject to the will of God, and in accordance with His written Word.

Importunity

In the 11th chapter of Luke we have the account of Jesus' discussion of importunity in prayer. He gives the illustration of the man whose friend comes to him at midnight, saying, "Friend, lend me three loaves; for a friend of mine is come to me from a journey, and I have nothing to set before him." The man replies, "Trouble me not: the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed. I cannot rise and give thee." Jesus says, "Though he will not rise and give him because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will arise and give him as many as he needeth." The Lord then adds, "And I say unto

you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you. For everyone that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." [26] The lesson here, of course, is not that God is unwilling to grant our requests, but that he who "will neither slumber nor sleep" [27] is to be *contrasted* with a neighbor who will not accommodate his friend until the request becomes more disturbing than the granting of it would be.

In the 18th chapter of Luke we find the story of the judge who said, "Though I fear not God, nor regard man; yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest she wear me out by her continual coming." The Lord then added, "Hear what the unrighteous judge saith. And shall not God avenge his elect, that cry to him day and night, and yet he is longsuffering over them? I say unto you, that he will avenge them speedily." [28] Here again we are not to understand that God is like the righteous judge, but that He is unlike him, and in contrast, is eager to bless those who will, by faithful prayer, open their hearts to receive His blessing.

We are certainly not to understand from either of the above references that God needs to be persuaded to grant our requests, nor that by much effort and insistence we can influence Him to change His mind. We are specifically instructed, "But when ye pray, *use not vain repetitions*, as the heathen do; for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them; for your

[26] Luke 11:5-10, R.V.
[27] Psalm 121:4, R.V.
[28] Luke 18:1-8, R.V.

Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him." [29] This word of the Lord Jesus seems to have reference to the Old Testament promise, "And it shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer: and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." [30]

The earnestness of importunate prayer is not necessary to persuade God to act, but is necessary *to open our own hearts* sincerely to receive what He is eager to give. As we pray earnestly and often, selfishness drops out of our petition, and we come more definitely into line with the purposes of God, as revealed in His Word.

Special Work of the Holy Spirit

We have discussed the work of the Holy Spirit in revealing to us the will of God.[31] This activity of the Holy Spirit is very definitely connected with the present subject, prayer for concrete things. If we pray in the name of Christ, subject to the will of God, instructed by His written Word, we must certainly seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit. As the Spirit guides us we shall grow in assurance of the trustworthiness of our Heavenly Father, and of all His promises.

There is another special work of the Holy Spirit, very definitely connected with prayer for concrete things. The Holy Spirit makes intercession for us, corrects our petitions, and presents them in terms of our real needs as God sees them. Paul tells us, "And in like manner the Spirit also helpeth our infirmity:

[29] Matthew 6 : 7, 8.
[30] Isaiah 65 : 24.
[31] See chapter on "Prayer for Guidance."

for we know not how to pray as we ought; but the Spirit himself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered (Weymouth translates "in yearnings that can find no words"); and he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." [32] In Dr. Biederwolf's book, *How Can God Answer Prayer?* I find the following very helpful quotation: "Those of you who have read the little book entitled *Expectation Corner*, will remember how Adam Slowman's guide stopped in front of a handsome storehouse and told him it was the Royal Exchange office, the place, he said, where our Lord Himself considers our applications and exchanges his grants to what is really most for our good. Some ask for success and speedy deliverance, he said and they get disappointments which bring them nearer to Him who will deliver them gloriously in trouble if not always out of trouble. Some ask for health of body and they get health of soul instead, and learn what it is to gain the highest attainable gift of a submitted will which brings changeless peace and is worth all the prosperity put together." We shall further discuss this activity of the Holy Spirit in "making intercession for us according to the will of God" under the heading "The Problem in Experience." What an illuminating thought that we who "know not how to pray as we ought" may trust our petitions to the mind of the Spirit who knows all of our unuttered yearnings and is known of Him who searches the heart!

[32] Romans 8:26, 27.

The Problem in Theory

Is it conceivable that human prayer could move God to specific action? This question is asked not only by scoffers and atheists, but by devout men and women who cannot understand God's way of answering human prayer.

Some who believe in transcendent deity are either shocked or confused by the thought of God's attention to such small matters as we bring before Him in our petitions. These should study not only the greatness of God's universe but the smallness of His creation. In the eighth Psalm, verses 3 and 4, we find one aspect of the problem: "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him?" Some would leave the problem there and fail to include the following words: "Thou hast made him a little lower than God, and crownest him with glory and honor. Thou makest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet." "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou established strength." The study of the greatness of God's universe, in astronomy, ought to be balanced by the study of the minute perfection of microscopic life. One who sees in these things the evidence of God's purpose and care, will not find difficulty in believing that God Almighty, in His infinite wisdom, answers the prayers of His little people on the little out-of-the-way planet called "Earth." "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? and not one of them shall fall on the ground

without your Father: but the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows." [33] There is nothing too small for the care of our Heavenly Father. Personally I pray for the most ridiculous little things. A pin may save an hour, and an hour may save a soul, and a soul may save a people. There is nothing too small to be an object of Christian prayer.

Some have misunderstood our offering of petition before the throne of grace. We do not beg an unwilling God to bestow His blessing upon us. God is eager to bless us in every conceivable way. There is a very beautiful expression of this fact in Luke's twelfth chapter, verse 32, "Fear not, little flock: for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Paul has put the matter very strongly,[34] "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" Prayer is the spiritual act by which we open our hearts to receive the blessing which God is eager to give.

It should be understood that prayer is the special means by which God intends us to receive His blessings. Those of us who are parents understand that it is possible, very largely, to provide for our children by mechanical means. One might arrange for them for days at a time; in fact, by the use of servants one might anticipate every want of a normal child, and obviate the necessity of any petitions from the child to the parent. Although we appreciate mechanical convenience and the help of others in the home, as well as elsewhere, yet we would not, if we could, pro-

[33] Matthew 10: 29-31, R.V. [34] Romans 8: 32.

vide for our children mechanically. We desire and intend that they shall bring their wants to us, that we may have the personal pleasure of satisfying their needs. Jesus said, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to *them that ask him?*" [35] Ezekiel reveals God's plan for the prayer life, "*Thus saith the Lord God; I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel,* to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock. As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts; so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men: and they shall know that I am the Lord." [36]

Skeptics have argued that the thought of God working miracles is inconsistent with the thought of His omniscience and omnipotence. He made a world, they say, which He had to patch up now and then. A perfect God would need to work no miracles. This argument has deceived many. Rather, we should say, a perfect God would do just what the Scripture tells us He has done. His work is ordinarily carried forward by secondary causes, but He has planned to work miracles, planned to answer prayer, supplementing and superseding mechanical processes of nature, *in order to reveal Himself* as our Heavenly Father, "giving good things to them that ask him."

Our petitions were foreknown from the beginning. We must not think of them as changing God's mind about the order of events. Neither must we suppose that our prayers lack anything of originality or free volition because foreknown by God from all eternity.

[35] Matthew 7:11. [36] Ezekiel 36:37, 38.

"O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou *understandest my thought afar off.*" [37] "Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask him." [38] "Before they call, I will answer: and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." [39] Our prayers are perfectly free, voluntary, and spontaneous expressions of our will toward God, but God has known them from the beginning. He is counting on the prayers and has already planned the answers. He has built the answers of our prayers into His plan for the universe. The foreknowledge of God is a very comforting thought to the Christian. Surely if a mother can know beforehand the night cries of a child who is ill, and can provide for the need expressed in the cry before the cry is uttered, we ought to have no difficulty in understanding how an all-wise God can answer prayers without destroying the orderly processes of His world.

The Problem in Experience

This question now comes before us: Are there not instances in which men pray sincerely in the name of Christ, seeking the will of God in accordance with His written Word, complying, so far as we can see, with all the conditions God has indicated, and yet their petition is not granted? What shall we say of "unanswered prayer"?

One of the very best methods of answering this question is to study examples of answered prayer. One might profitably compose many volumes of

[37] Psalm 139: 1, 2.
[38] Matthew 6: 8.
[39] Isaiah 65: 24.

testimony. A book entitled, *Answered Prayer in China*, published by the Sunday School Times Company, and a book entitled, *I Cried; He Answered*, published by the Moody Bible Institute Colportage Association, are of immense value in strengthening our faith. On page 102 of the latter volume a personal experience of my father's is recounted.

There is much value in the old-fashioned hymn:

"When upon life's billows you are tempest tossed,
When you are discouraged, thinking all is lost,
Count your many blessings, name them one by one,
And it will surprise you what the Lord hath done."

Multiplied testimony of answered prayer, however, will not satisfy the question raised by those who feel that prayer is not *always* answered in accordance with God's explicit promises. Some extremely capable Christian leaders reply, "God always answers; but sometimes He answers, 'No.'" To me this statement seems to be a mistake, resulting from failure to understand the problem. What we mean by "answer" is "granting of request." We must not quibble about the promises. The Lord said, "If ye ask anything in my name, *I will do it*." [40] We believe that if all true Christian prayers could be studied, and all their circumstances understood, we should not find that God has ever answered "No." [41] How then shall we understand the prayer of Christians on the losing side in a great war, and a multitude of other instances, in which the things named in Christian

[40] John 14:14 (The fact that the pronoun "it" is not in the Greek does not change the translation).

[41] To say that He always answers "Yes" would also seem misleading, for the things named in Christian prayer do not always come to pass.

prayer have not come to pass? I believe the answer is to be found in the fact that *God satisfies the real need represented in every Christian prayer.*[42]

An elderly man of God once challenged a group of young people of which I was a member to keep track of their petitions. "You will find," he said, "that every petition offered truly, in the name of Christ, will either be checked off as granted or crossed out as superseded by some better blessing, which will more than take the place of that for which you asked." I have accepted this challenge and found it to be true.

We noted above the special function of the Holy Spirit in making intercession for us, "for we know not how to pray as we ought." I believe that this work of the Spirit embodies the answer to our problem. We bring our faulty requests to Him. He understands not only the words we utter, but the meaning back of the words. If we name the wrong thing while sincerely desirous of the will of God, He corrects the mistakes and grants the real underlying petition.

A very simple illustration of this principle is that of a child asking for what his mother has in her hand. The child believes the mother to have a piece of bread, but, as a matter of fact, what the mother has is poison. The mother, therefore, gets for the child a piece of bread. This is not the thing named in the prayer, but is in reality the thing asked for.

In my personal experience I remember praying very definitely for money for a certain part of my

[42] See discussion of Psalm 106:15 on page 35.

education. The money had to come at a certain date in order that I might go on with this particular study. The money did not come and the study could not be carried forward. A few years later, however, the Lord wonderfully led me into a study much more valuable for my present work — a study which I should never have pursued had I gone forward with the one I formerly desired to carry on. I believe that God very definitely answered my prayer and granted my petition, translating my words into the terms of my real need.

The lame man, whose story is told in the third chapter of Acts, asked for alms. He did not receive alms, but received "strength in his feet and ankle bones" which enabled him, doubtless, to earn his living. I once heard the governor of a southern state say, "My father prayed for what he thought was right during the Civil War. I testify that God answered his prayer in causing the right to triumph, and in keeping this great nation united." Paul's thorn in the flesh illustrates this principle.[43] David Smith says, "Paul's thorn became a hedge of thorns directing his pathway."

I wish to pass on to all who may read this thesis the challenge which meant so much in my life. Keep track of your petitions. You will find that every one is checked off as definitely granted, or crossed out as superseded by some better blessing which more than takes the place of that for which you asked.

I repeated this challenge some months ago to an audience in Pennsylvania. After the service a splendid Christian woman came to me with tears in her

[43] II Corinthians 12 : 9-17.

eyes. The story she told was sad, indeed. A young woman friend of hers had recently died, leaving three small children. There had been much earnest prayer for the mother's recovery, but death had come, nevertheless. How could any one say that prayer was answered in the affirmative?

My reply was given with much hesitation, and yet with faith that God's promises are always true. I explained that the pattern of our life is exceedingly intricate. God's Word reveals that "it is appointed unto man once to die." The time of our departure is entirely in God's hands. I suggested that even in so sad a case some day we shall understand that God has done "exceeding abundantly" above all that we could ask or think. Suddenly the face of the poor woman brightened, and she explained that after the mother's death the children were taken to a splendid Christian home for their upbringing, a home much better and of much more sound spiritual tone than their natural home ever would have been. No human being could govern such circumstances, and none should try, in this world, completely to explain. God has, however, given us light enough that we may be assured that His promises are true. "If ye shall ask anything in my name, *I will do it*."

I once saw a large silk loom weaving a very intricate pattern. I marveled at the perfection of the mechanism. So far as I could tell no human hand controlled the process. Literally, hundreds of needles, operated by mechanically shifted patterns, wove the threads in and out with marvelous accuracy. To me the process was simply impossible. Nevertheless, I saw the pattern form itself in the web be-

fore my very eyes. Surely, if the hand and mind of man can devise such mechanical perfection in the weaving of a fabric, God Almighty is able to weave the threads of our individual lives in and out with absolute trustworthiness. Our knowledge is extremely limited and sometimes we must wait long for the answer, but surely we know enough to trust Him. His promises are true.

Conclusion

The thought that God always makes good His promises, and that the Holy Spirit takes charge of the mistakes in our prayers, correcting them, and insuring the answer, according to our real need in the sight of God, gives us much more boldness in our prayer life. Let us bring every petition, great or small, before the throne of grace. Let us realize the meaning of Paul's injunction, "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." [44] Let us talk with God frankly and freely. He knows our needs and He cares for our welfare. He hears our every word. God answers prayer.

"Oh, what peace we often forfeit,
Oh, what needless pain we bear,
All because we do not carry
Everything to God in prayer!"

[44] Philippians 4:6.

CHAPTER IV

INTERCESSION

Prayer for Others

"Pray one for another . . . . The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." [1]

The Problem

Perhaps the most difficult problem found in the study of prayer is the problem of intercession. All the difficulties encountered in our study of other types of prayer appear in this type, and there is the additional question, How can the prayer of one avail for another? Perhaps it may be taken as a commentary on the selfishness of our nature that the problem of intercession is so difficult. The question cannot be answered by any clever formula, but we may be confident that a thorough study of the subject of intercession in the Scripture, and in Christian experience, will satisfy our hearts and our minds.

The Scripture Commands Intercession

The text which we have placed at the head of this chapter expresses a thought often found throughout the Bible. One is astonished to find how many times, and under what variety of circumstances, God's people are directed to intercede for one another. Paul writes to Timothy very definitely, "I exhort

[1] James 5:16.

therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, *intercessions*, and giving of thanks, be made *for all men;* for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." [2] This word of the great apostle is truly a direction for Christian worship in every generation. Intercession is an integral part of the Christian life and the Christian warfare. "And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and *supplication for all saints.*" [3] It is evident that our Christian life is not only individualistic; in the midst of the hustling and the jostling of the warfare of faith we are to "bear one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ." [4] We can never properly obey this command without the practice of intercessory prayer.

Many earnest Christian people are interested in specific commands for intercession for the Jews as God's chosen people, "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem; they shall prosper that love thee." [5] The Lord's promise to Abraham was, "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee; and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed." [6] God's purpose for His chosen people is not yet fulfilled. Those who neglect to intercede for them are missing a promised blessing.

[2] I Timothy 2:1-4.
[3] Ephesians 6:17, 18.
[4] Galatians 6:2.
[5] Psalm 122:6.
[6] Genesis 12:3.

Requests for Intercession

It is surprising how many times the Apostle Paul asks people to pray for him. The following request is very strong, indeed: "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye *strive together with me in your prayers to God for me.*" [7] To the Thessalonians Paul writes: "Finally, brethren, pray for us that the word of the Lord may have free course, and be glorified, even as it is with you." [8] To the Corinthians Paul says that they are also "helping together on our behalf by your supplication." [9] The Colossians, who "had not seen his face in the flesh," [10] are asked to intercede "that God may open unto us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ." [11] In his first letter to the Thessalonians, possibly the first of all his epistles, one short sentence seems to suggest a settled habit of requesting the intercession of those to whom he ministered, "Brethren, pray for us." [12]

God's Plan for Blessing

From the foregoing commands and requests directing intercession, we gather that God has planned to bless us through the prayers of others. In our study of petition we found that it is His plan to bestow His blessings upon us through prayer. It is surely a very beautiful conception that not only our own prayers for ourselves, but the prayers of others for us, open the way for His blessing. The word of

[7] Romans 15 : 30.
[8] II Thessalonians 3 : 1.
[9] II Corinthians 1 : 11, R.V.
[10] Colossians 2 : 1, R.V.
[11] Colossians 4 : 3, R.V.
[12] I Thessalonians 5 : 25. See also Hebrews 13 : 18.

the Lord to Abimelech is very strange, but very full of meaning. He was commanded to make restitution, "for he (Abraham) is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live." [13] Perhaps the most striking case of intercession recorded in the Scriptures is that of the palsied man brought to Jesus, let down through the roof by four others. The intercession of these four was not that of words, but of action. We read, "When Jesus saw *their faith*, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee." [14] The evident plan of our Heavenly Father, to bless us through the prayers of others, is very beautiful from one point of view; but from another point of view it intensifies the problem under discussion. How can it be?

The Intercession of Christ

It would be very profitable for us to search through the Scriptures, studying the great examples of intercession.[15] Although it will be impossible to do this, we must take time for the study of the greatest of all intercessors, the One on whose work every other intercession depends, the Lord Jesus Christ.

[13] Genesis 20:7.

[14] Mark 2:5.

[15] Scriptural examples of intercession: Abraham, for Abimelech (Genesis 20:7, 17, 18). Abraham, for Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:23-32). Judah, for Benjamin (Genesis 44:33). Daniel, for Israel and Jerusalem (Daniel 9:3-23). Samuel, for Israel (I Samuel 12:23). David, for Israel (II Samuel 24:17; I Chronicles 29:10-19). Moses, for Israel (Exodus 32:31, 32). Paul, for Israel (Romans 9:1-3). Paul, for Israel (Romans 10:1); for Christians of Rome (Romans 1:9); for Ephesians (Ephesians 1:16-20; 3:14-21); for Philippians (Philippians 1:3-7, 9); for Colossians (Colossians 1:3-9); for Thessalonians (I Thessalonians 1:2; 3:10-13; 5:23; II Thessalonians 1:11, 12; 2:16, 17; 3:5, 16). Philemon, for Paul (Philemon 22). The church in Jerusalem, for Peter (Acts 12:5). For the sick (James 5:14, 15).

The intercession of Christ was predicted in Old Testament prophecy. "He hath poured out his soul unto death, and he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bear the sins of many, and *made intercession for the transgressors.*" [16] During the days of His life upon earth the Lord prayed definitely for His disciples. I wish to give personal testimony to the help which I have received from the words, "I have prayed for thee." [17] I know that these words were addressed to Peter definitely; but I am confident that the Lord has prayed for each individual of His people. In His great high-priestly prayer we find the words, "I pray for them . . . which thou has given me; for they are thine . . . Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word." [18] The historical intercession of our Lord comes to its great, all-inclusive climax in His words on the cross, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." [19] By this prayer of intercession He became the substitute of those who put Him to death. Where He might have said, "Angelic hosts, destroy them," He said, instead, "Father, forgive them." This intercessory prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ should be studied in connection with the Messianic prophecy of the sixty-ninth Psalm. We have in this Psalm a description of His crucifixion. Many of the awful details of this agony are given. In the Psalm, however, we find one of the most terrible curses ever pronounced against those who put Him to death. We

[16] Isaiah 53 : 12.
[17] Luke 22 : 31, 32.
[18] John 17 : 9-24.
[19] Luke 23 : 34.

may take this curse to indicate the path of justice without mercy. It would have fallen upon the murderers had He come down from the cross, as He was challenged to do, calling for twelve legions of angels to destroy the race of men who were putting him, God's Son, to death. In the New Testament record, however, when we come to the point where the curse of the Psalm is found, we find the intercessory prayer, "Father, forgive them." He bore the curse, and interceding, set us free!

The historical intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ, predicted from of old, coming to its climax in His substitutional death upon the cross, has its issue in His eternal intercession, and is the ground of our hope of eternal life. "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, *who also maketh intercession for us.*" [20] "If any man sin, we have *an advocate with the Father,* Jesus Christ, the righteous." [21] "Wherefore, he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing *he ever liveth to make intercession for them.*" [22]

The intercessory work of the Lord Jesus Christ intensifies our sense of wonder at God's plan for intercessory prayer. Nevertheless, it gives us the beginning of a solution to our problem. It must be, somehow, that our work of intercession is related to what Christ has accomplished and is accomplishing for us.

[20] Romans 8 : 33, 34.
[21] I John 2 : 1, 2.
[22] Hebrews 7 : 25.

Conditions to Be Met

The conditions of prayer described up to the present time all apply to the type of prayer now under discussion. Prayer must be in the name of Christ,[23] according to His will,[24] instructed by His Word,[25] out of a cleansed heart,[26] in faith,[27] in agreement with others,[28] with importunity.[29] Prayer instructed by the Word of God must be given special emphasis in the study of intercession. We have seen that certain types of intercession are discouraged or forbidden in the Scriptures. (See page 57 ff.)

In the study of scriptural examples of intercession we seem to find a further prerequisite for intercessory prayer,—*willingness to sacrifice* for the end in view. We have been very careful to explain that Christian prayer depends upon its object, not its subject. *God* answers prayer. We do not answer our own prayers. Having safeguarded our statement as we have, we must say, on the other hand, that one who prays earnestly will certainly be ready to sacrifice if God calls upon him to do so, in order to attain the end in view. An example of human intercession is given in Judah's plea for Benjamin: "Now, therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide instead of the lad, a bondman to my lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren." [30] Moses' intercession for Israel is one of the most striking examples of self-sacrificing intercession: "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sins—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee,

[23] John 14 : 13, 14.
[24] I John 5 : 14, 15.
[25] John 15 : 17.
[26] Psalm 66 : 18.
[27] Mark 9 : 23.
[28] Matthew 18 : 19.
[29] Luke 11 : 5-13 and 18 : 1-8.
[30] Genesis 44 : 33.

out of thy book which thou hast written."[31] Paul's intercession for Israel is of the same order; there is a pathos and intensity in the words which grips our hearts: "I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart; for I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh."[32] The intercession of our Lord Jesus Christ, finding its all-inclusive expression in His intercessory prayer upon the cross, is, of course, the supreme example of the sacrificial element in intercessory prayer.

I do not know that there is any definite statement in the Scripture to the effect that intercessory prayer must be accompanied by a willingness to sacrifice. Certain it is that nothing we can do has any merit in atoning for sin before God.

"Jesus paid it all;
All to Him I owe.
Sin had left a crimson stain;
He washed it white as snow."

God's reply to Moses' intercession was, "Whosoever hath sinned against me, him will I blot out of my book."[33] God forgave Israel's sin on the basis of the blood of the Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world, not on the basis of Moses' sacrificial prayer. "None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him."[34]

The examples of the sacrificial element in the in-

[31] Exodus 32 : 31, 32.
[32] Romans 9 : 1-3.
[33] Exodus 32 : 32.
[34] Psalm 49 : 7.

tercessory prayers referred to above simply indicate that "the mind of Christ" ought to be in us. We cannot *be* the Son of God, dying for the world, but we must necessarily *represent* the Son of God who died for the world. How can we pray for others in the name of the crucified Christ, while refusing to live the crucified life?

Our Priestly Function

The priesthood of believers is an essential doctrine of the Christian faith. Our privilege of intercessory prayer is necessarily connected with our priestly function. It is very strange and very wonderful that God has given us the privilege of standing between the living and the dead, making intercession on the basis of the atoning work of our Lord Jesus Christ.[35] Jesus said, "As thou didst send me into the world, even so sent I them into the world." [36] He came into the world to intercede, to die that we might live. He has sent us into the world to preach the gospel, to minister to those who are lost, mediating to them the benefits of the redemption purchased by His blood. The great High Priest has offered Himself, His sacrifice, once and for all. We, the subordinate priests, have our intercessory part in administering His grace to those for whom He died.[36a]

"When Jesus has found you, tell others the story
That my loving Saviour is your Saviour, too;
Then pray that your Saviour will bring them to glory,
And prayer will be answered; 'twas answered for you."

[35] Numbers 16 : 46.
[36] John 17 : 18, R.V.
[36a] See discussion on Forgiveness of Sins, page 23 ff.

Special Work of the Holy Spirit

The convicting and converting work of the Holy Spirit [37] was discussed in our chapter on "Confession." His work of reminding,[38] guiding,[39] revealing,[40] was discussed in our chapter on "Prayer for Guidance." His work of correcting and interpreting our petitions in terms of our real need, in accordance with the will of God, was discussed in our chapter on "Petition." Paul indicates that there is a special work of the Holy Spirit connected with intercessory prayer; for he says, "The Spirit himself maketh intercession for us." "He maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." [41] From this statement we should infer that the Spirit-filled life will be a life filled with intercessory prayer, and that one who would be effective in intercession must yield himself completely to the influence and power of the Holy Spirit.

Accountability for Blessings

Those who are blessed by the intercession of others are accountable for the good which God has sent into their lives. The palsied man, healed because of the faith of the four others who brought him to Christ, would have found his healing a curse rather than a blessing, had he not himself accepted Christ and given glory to God. A "blessing" will not "bless" one who rebels against God. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the

[37] John 3 : 5-8.
[38] John 14 : 26.
[39] John 16 : 12-15.
[40] I Corinthians 2 : 9, 10.
[41] Romans 8 : 26, 27, R.V.

Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." [42]

Conclusion

Intercession is commanded in the Scriptures, and examples of requests for intercession, as well as examples of intercessory prayer, are very striking indeed. We conclude, therefore, that it is God's plan to bless us through the prayers of others. The intercessory work of our Lord Jesus Christ is the basis of our intercessory prayer. The conditions to be met imply that we must have the mind of Christ in willingness to sacrifice. The special function of the Holy Spirit, in interceding for us, prompts us to yield completely to His influence if we would be effective as intercessors. When we understand that intercessory prayer is our priestly function, based upon the work of Christ, and that we do not change the freedom of others, but that they are responsible for the blessing they receive, we are able in a measure to answer the question as to how the prayer of one can change the life and circumstances of another.

Finally, we must emphasize our *privilege* and our *duty* in intercession. There are, sometimes, chests of gold and jewels locked with many locks, so that the articles of value cannot be obtained unless every man who holds a key to a lock is present. Each of us, in the privilege of intercessory prayer, holds a key to a blessing for others. God has so arranged the world of human affairs that, if we fail to intercede, we are made responsible for the lack of blessing which others may suffer.

[42] James 1:17.

A child was once carried away by the outgoing current of the tide. A strong swimmer threw out a life-preserver, cast down the rope attached to it on the wharf charging the by-standers to hold it fast, plunged into the current, seized the child with one hand and the life-preserver with the other, only to find that the by-standers had stupidly failed to hold the rope. A statue was erected in memory of the lost swimmer and the child; but their failure to hold the rope of the life-preserver is a thing which the by-standers will never forget. There are missionaries on the foreign field looking to us for intercessory prayer. We are responsible for them, and to God. Shall we be found faithful?

"Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong,
Or others, that we are not always strong;
That we are ever overborne with care,
That we should ever weak or heartless be,
Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer;
And joy, and strength, and courage are with Thee?"

CHAPTER V

GRATULATION

Prayer of Thanksgiving

"Oh, give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good; because his mercy endureth forever." [1] "Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name." [2]

Scriptural Examples of Thanksgiving

The life of the people of God is always characterized by the giving of thanks. From the beginning to the end of the inspired history of God's dealing with His people, we find a spontaneous overflowing expression of gratitude to God. The giving of thanks is most beautifully illustrated in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. We find Him giving thanks for food before partaking of a meal, as John records: "And Jesus took the loaves; and *when he had given thanks* he distributed to his disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would." [3]

In the midst of the conflict of His earthly ministry, confronted by the hardness of heart of the cities which He had to upbraid, Jesus breaks forth in thanksgiving to the Father for the wisdom of His plan of making Himself known to men. "At that

[1] Psalm 118:1.
[2] Psalm 100:4.
[3] John 6:11.

season Jesus answered and said, *I thank thee,* O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou didst hide these things from the wise and understanding, and didst reveal them unto babes. Yea, Father, for so it was well pleasing in thy sight."[4] The thought seems to be that the cities against which the Lord pronounced woes, with all their human wisdom and culture, lacked that simple sincerity by which God's children learn to know Him.

As our Lord stood before the tomb of Lazarus, surrounded by those who were crushed with sorrow and hopeless in the presence of death, He gave thanks for His own relationship, which is so forcefully set forth in John's Gospel: "And Jesus lifted up his eyes and said, Father, *I thank thee that thou heardest me.* And I knew that thou hearest me always; but because of the multitude that standeth around I said it, that they may believe that thou didst send me."[5]

At the last supper, that night in which the Lord was betrayed, His custom of giving thanks was unbroken, for the Gospel records tell us, "And he took the cup, and *gave thanks,* and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it."[6]

On that memorable walk to Emmaus Jesus joined the two discouraged disciples and was not recognized by them, for they said, "We hoped that it was he who should redeem Israel . . . Certain women of our company amazed us, . . . saying that they had also seen a vision of angels, who said that he was alive. And certain of them that were with us went to the tomb, . . . but him they saw not."[7] One who

[4] Matthew 11 : 25, 26, R.V.
[5] John 11 : 41, 42, R.V.
[6] Matthew 26 : 27.
[7] Luke 24 : 21-24, R.V.

has had the experience of meeting a man he believes to have died, will not be at all surprised that the Lord was not recognized by these two in their state of despondency. The beauty of the story is that "it came to pass, when he had sat down with them to meat, he took the bread and blessed; and breaking it, he gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew him . . . And they rose up that very hour, and returned to Jerusalem, . . . and they rehearsed the things that happened in the way, and how he was known of them in the breaking of the bread."[8] Many Bible students have remarked the beauty of the fact that it was in the act of giving thanks, as He broke bread, that the Lord was recognized by His heart-broken disciples. What a happiness it will be, with thanksgiving, to sit at table at the marriage supper of the Lamb in the kingdom of God![9]

If the life of our Lord Jesus Christ wonderfully exemplifies thanksgiving, the same characteristic is found in the life of His great apostle. In almost every epistle he begins by expressing his thankfulness to God for the fellowship of those to whom he is writing. In the first letter to the Thessalonians, so far as we know the first extant epistle of Paul, we read, "*We give thanks* to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers."[10] In the epistle to the Philippians, one of the last group of his public letters, we find one of the most gracious examples of thanksgiving to be found in any literature: "*I thank my God* upon all my remembrance of

[8] See Luke 24:30-35, R.V.
[9] Matthew 8:11; Luke 13:29; Revelation 19:9.
[10] I Thessalonians 1:2.

you, always in every supplication of mine on behalf of you all, making my supplication with joy, for your fellowship in furtherance of the gospel from the first day until now; being confident of this very thing, that he who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ."[11] To Timothy he writes, "*I thank God*, whom I serve from my forefathers in a pure conscience, how unceasing is my remembrance of thee in my supplications, night and day longing to see thee, remembering thy tears, that I may be filled with joy."[12] This giver of thanks was the same great apostle whose experience warranted the sorry statement, "We are pressed on every side, yet not straitened; perplexed, yet not unto despair; pursued, yet not foresaken; smitten down, yet not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you."[13] More specifically Paul writes: "Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day have I been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of rivers, in perils of robbers, in perils from my countrymen, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in labor and travail,

[11] Philippians 1 : 3-6, R.V.
[12] II Timothy 1 : 3, 4, R.V.
[13] II Corinthians 4 : 7-12, R.V.

in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, there is that which presseth upon me daily: anxiety for all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is caused to stumble, and I burn not? If I must needs glory, I will glory of the things that concern my weakness. The God and Father of the Lord Jesus, he who is blessed forevermore knoweth that I lie not." [14] It is this same Paul, with a record of grief and sadness which can scarcely be paralleled in the life of any servant of the Lord, who gives us the greatest, triumphant, ringing shouts of thanksgiving. "Thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" [15] "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place!" [16] "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!" [17]

Perhaps, among the Old Testament saints, Daniel is most like the Apostle Paul in the characteristic of thanksgiving. We do not, indeed, find in him the glad cries of victory, but we find the settled attitude of thankfulness, regardless of outward circumstances. When Daniel knew that the decree, which virtually condemned him to the den of lions, was signed, "he went into his house: and, his windows being open in his chamber toward Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, *as he did aforetime.*" [18]

[14] II Corinthians 11 : 24-31, R.V.
[15] I Corinthians 15 : 57, R.V.
[16] II Corinthians 2 : 14.
[17] II Corinthians 9 : 15.

[18] Daniel 6 : 10. For other examples of thanksgiving, see that of Eleazer (Genesis 24 : 27); Jethro (Exodus 18 : 10,

Thanksgiving Enjoined Upon Us

The spontaneous nature of thanksgiving, as it is revealed to us in the history of the experiences of God's people, should not cause us to suppose that the *will* is not involved in the giving of thanks. One is inclined to have little patience with the common tendency of pampering our psychological inclinations. Inspired writers of Scripture *command* us to give thanks. Our affections are not the fickle, involuntary things we sometimes think them to be. The Lord commanded us, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God." "Thou shalt love thy neighbor." Paul commands, "Set your affections on things above." He commands the people of Colosse, "Continue steadfastly in prayer, watching therein with thanksgiving." [19] To the Thessalonians he writes in his first letter, "Pray without ceasing. *In everything give thanks:* for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus to you-ward." [20] He exhorts Timothy that the "giving of thanks be made for all men." [21]

The sweet perfume of a life characterized by thanksgiving is not produced from the careless flowers of indifferent emotionalism. The spontaneity of thankfulness becomes more genuine when it results from a settled attitude of life. There is a nobility in the mature habit of thankfulness, which caused Daniel, under great distress, to give thanks "before his God as he did aforetime,"—a nobility

11); Hannah (I Samuel 2:1); Solomon (I Kings 15); David (I Chronicles 4); Nehemiah (Nehemiah 11:17; 12:27 and 13:8); Daniel (Daniel 2:19).

[19] Colossians 4:2, R.V.

[20] I Thessalonians 5:18, R.V.

[21] I Timothy 2:1.

which is lacking in the mere immature animal response of unenduring gladness.

It is a fundamental law of our psychological nature that attention produces interest, and interest begets love. A missionary of the cross, who had suffered much for the cause of Christ, once made plain to me the meaning of the fact that we are commanded to be thankful. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits," [22] is not a thoughtless ejaculation, but a serious command, which may be obeyed with the greatest possible happiness by attention to, and interest in, a settled attitude of thankfulness.

The Sacrifice of Thanksgiving

In the Levitical system of worship there is prescribed ritual for a thanksgiving sacrifice.[23] And we read, "And when ye will offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving unto the Lord, offer it at your own will." [24] This type of sacrifice is frequently mentioned in the Psalms, with emphasis upon its spiritual aspect. "And let them offer the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with singing." [25] It is not the offering of animal sacrifices which constitutes the real act of thanksgiving, but the attitude of heart toward God. The Lord says, "If I were hungry, I would not tell thee; for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof. Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Offer unto God the sacrifice of thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the Most High." [26] Not the "horns and hoofs" of

[22] Psalm 103 : 2.
[23] Leviticus 7 : 12-15.
[24] Leviticus 22 : 29.
[25] Psalm 107 : 22, R.V.
[26] Psalm 50 : 12-14, R.V.

an ox or bullock, but thankfulness of heart is pleasing to God. The psalmist says, "But I am poor and sorrowful. Let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high. I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving. This also shall please the Lord better than an ox or bullock that hath horns and hoofs." [27] One feels that many Thanksgiving sermons, and prayers, are more filled with "horns and hoofs" than with the true sacrifice of thanksgiving.

Like all other parts of the Old Testament ritual, the sacrifice of thanksgiving is fulfilled for us in Christ. This sacrifice, in its spiritual significance, may be offered through Him. "By him, therefore, let us offer *the sacrifice of praise* to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, *giving thanks* to his name." [28]

The Ground of Thanksgiving

The giving of thanks rests upon two grounds: first, receiving of benefits; and second, the belief that these benefits are bestowed by a person who cares for us.

It is not at all out of keeping with the spiritual nature of our faith to give thanks to God for the material goods of life.[29] In the infinite wisdom of God we are placed in a material world dependent upon material things. These things are neither good, nor evil in and of themselves, but if received with thanksgiving, they are blessings from the Lord.[30]

[27] Psalm 69 : 29-31.
[28] Hebrews 13 : 15.
[29] See discussion of "Prayer for Concrete Things," page 53.
[30] See Romans 14 : 6, 7; I Timothy 4 : 3, 4; John 6 : 11; Acts 27 : 35.

Our giving of thanks for daily bread is a very elementary, but also a very fundamental thing.

The giving of thanks for material blessings, however, when compared with thanksgiving for the experience of grace in Christ Jesus, sinks into insignificance. In fact, it is doubtful whether we should ever think of giving thanks to God for the supply of our daily needs, were it not for the great overpowering fact of our Christian experience. There is a sob of joy in Paul's thanksgiving over the salvation of the Roman Christians. "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." [31]

> "O the love that drew salvation's plan,
> O the grace that brought it down to man,
> O the mighty gulf that God did span
> At Calvary."

Those who have not experienced the saving grace of God can never know the depth of the meaning of this testimony: "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." [32]

Personal Reciprocal Relationship Implied

If thanksgiving is grounded upon the fact of benefits received from a person who cares for us, it necessarily implies a personal relationship of a reciprocal nature. This relationship, in fact, is implied in every type of prayer, but is especially prominent in thanksgiving. Men might continue to petition a figurative, or personified Deity, might even engage

[31] Romans 6:17. [32] Psalm 34:6.

in all the other forms of prayer, senseless though they would be; but it is difficult to imagine men giving thanks, if there is no supreme person who cares to know the gratitude of our hearts. The probability is that all forms of prayer would cease if we lost the sense of a personal relationship with God. Thanksgiving would, doubtless, be the first type of prayer to disappear under such circumstances.

Problems: Is This Relationship Real?

We are confronted in the world today with a pantheistic philosophy, which seeks to clothe itself with all the terms and forms of orthodox Christianity, while taking from these terms and forms the content of true historical meaning. Men do not usually enjoy being called atheists; rather they say, "We have changed the definition of our terms." I listened to a lecture some time ago in which the speaker said, "We believe in a God who is imminent, and not in a God who is transcendent." The speaker seemed not to be conscious of the fact that his very statement involved a contradiction. If we have any regard for the historical meaning of the word "God," we cannot legitimately use this word to describe a non-transcendent Being. This speaker went on to say, "God is personal, but not transcendent." This statement, also, is self-contradictory, if we have any regard for the established usage of the word personality. In fact, I felt throughout the lecture that the speaker was seeking to use words to obscure meaning, not to convey meaning. A God who is not transcendent, above nature, acting in and through,

and upon nature, according to the counsels of His omnipotent and omniscient will, is not the Christian Deity.

The following quotation comes from one of our popular writers: "God sleeps in the mineral, stirs in the vegetable, feels in the animal, and thinks in man." According to this statement, God and nature are identical. Men do not realize the loss they suffer in adopting such a description of God. A Christian views nature as beautiful because he believes it to be the *handiwork* of God, because he believes that God in His infinite providence supersedes the incompleteness of the natural process. If God is nothing more than nature, then both God and nature are hideous and cruel. The best truth that nature can offer us is that "the wages of sin is death." There is no possibility of forgiveness of sin in the natural process. There is naught but inexorable law. If God is to be identified as nature, the thought of redemption must be erased from our minds, and the person and work of our Lord Jesus Christ must be erased from the pages of history.

Professor Case (*The Historicity of Jesus*, page 319) gives a certain monistic view of the world in the following words: "God and the universe are one in the most rigid sense, and His activity is not to be differentiated at any point from the totality of the cosmic flux." Professor Höffding, in his *Philosophy of Religion*, argues along these lines. With great skill and deftness he takes all theistic meaning out of the word "God"; and leaves us only a combination of letters and sounds, with a certain amount of sentimentality attached. Many earnest Christian

people have arisen to say that the use of words without their established meanings is dishonest. For one to retain the word "God" in discussing Christian theology, while abandoning historical Christian theism, is a dishonorable procedure.

The following little poem has been much quoted since it first appeared a few years ago. My personal testimony is that I have never seen a lie more subtly set forth.

"A fire-mist and a planet,
A crystal and a cell,
A jelly-fish and a saurian,
And caves where cavemen dwell;
Then a sense of law and beauty
And a face turned from the clod;
Some call it evolution,
And others call it God.

A haze on the far horizon,
The infinite, tender sky,
The ripe, rich tint of the cornfield,
And the wild geese sailing high;
All over the upland and lowland
The charm of the goldenrod;
Some of us call it autumn,
And others call it God."

Abraham Lincoln used to ask his friends, "If you call a dog's tail a leg, how many legs has the dog?" They would usually reply, "Five." But Lincoln would answer, "No, it makes no difference what you call it, a dog has four legs just the same."

If business men were as deliberately deceitful in their use of words as theologians sometimes are,

many of them would find their way to the penitentiary.

The problem of Christian theism is, of course, a very real difficulty in the thinking of the modern world. The simplest and most obvious phenomena of life are, of course, personal. Nevertheless, we are so occupied with mechanical things and mechanistic principles that we forget that we ourselves are personal beings related to the supreme Persons. The law of the uniformity of nature, physical cause and effect, has meant so much to the progress of mechanics that we forget the fact of personal cause.

Logically, or scientifically, there is no difference in kind between an act of God and an act of man. I mean merely to say that in either case a personality acts as a free, or volitional cause which is not determined by other causes in nature. When a scientist, knowing that a certain experiment universally operates in a certain way, comes into his laboratory one morning to discover that the experiment has not operated in the usual way, he draws one of two conclusions; either some mechanical cause has accidentally interfered with the experiment, or a person has interfered. If no mechanical cause could have interfered, the scientist does not contradict the law of cause and effect, or the law of the uniformity of nature, when he concludes that some person interfered. If he thinks that the person is insane or evil, he seeks to exclude him from future experiments. If he thinks that the person is intelligent and good, he seeks to communicate with him on the subject of the unusual interference.

Similarly, when we know that the dead universally remain physically dead, but that One (we know by overwhelming historical evidence) arose from the dead in bodily form, we ought logically to conclude that a Personality, one greater than humanity, interfered with the universal course of nature, and we ought, through prayer and Bible study, to seek to communicate with Him and find His reasons for so doing.

Whenever a man decides to raise his hand, and raises it, there is just as great a logical and scientific leap from personal, non-material cause to material physical effect, as there is when God raises the dead. I object to the philosophy of Prof. Höffding on the ground that he repeatedly speaks of human beings as though they were original, volitional causes producing great effects in history, but when one presumes to believe in a miracle, or in other words, to regard God as an original volitional Cause, he cries, "Scientifically impossible!" Let us be consistent. I insist that if one rules out miracles of God as logically impossible, he is compelled by the same logic to rule out his own volitional personality, and regard himself as absolutely, in every respect, a mechanical dummy.[33]

The philosophy of our day chills and slowly paralyzes our giving of thanks to God, and with this our every point of contact with Him. Nevertheless, His people will still render the sacrifice of thanksgiving to His holy name. His sheep will hear His voice and go not astray.

[33] See my article on "Liberal Education" in *The Bible Today*, March, 1924.

"Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks." [34] "Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" [35]

"The spacious firmament on high,
With all the blue ethereal sky,
And spangled heavens—a shining frame,
Their great Original proclaim.

The unwearied sun, from day to day,
Does his Creator's power display,
And publishes to every land
The work of an Almighty Hand.

In reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice,
Forever singing as they shine,
'The hand that made us is Divine.'"

Conditions to Be Met

Before we can enter the personal relationship implied in the prayer of thanksgiving we must be born again and take our position before God in His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is surprising how many passages of Scripture emphasize the fact that thanksgiving must be offered *through Christ*, as from those who have accepted Him as their personal Saviour. "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so *walk ye in him;* rooted and *built up in him*, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving." [36] "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, *giving thanks to God* and the Father *by him*." [37]

[34] Psalm 75 : 1.
[35] Revelation 19 : 6.
[36] Colossians 2 : 6, 7.
[37] Colossians 3 : 17.

Paul enjoins the Ephesian Christians to be "giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." [38]

Luke tells us of the cleansing of five lepers, only one of whom returned to give praise to God. To him Jesus said, "Arise, go thy way: thy faith hath made thee whole." [39] The faith by which we turn to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ is an absolutely necessary prerequisite for the fellowship with God implied in the prayer of thanksgiving.

Special Work of the Holy Spirit

It is the work of the Holy Spirit to bring us into the personal relationship implied in the type of prayer under discussion. Paul makes this very plain in writing to the Galatians, "And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." [40] The filial relationship with God into which we are brought by the work of the Holy Spirit is, as has been said above, the essential ground of thanksgiving. Our God has said, "I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters." [41] Well may John exclaim at the thought of becoming a child of God, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God; therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God: and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we

[38] Ephesians 5:20.
[39] Luke 17:12-19.
[40] Galatians 4:6, 7.
[41] II Corinthians 6:17, 18.

know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." [42]

A very simple illustration may serve to close this discussion on the subject of thanksgiving. A friend receives a gift from his neighbor and calls him by telephone, to express his thanks, and to enjoy with him a word of fellowship. In the midst of a sentence this individual is seized with that strange, embarrassing feeling which comes to us when we realize that we have been disconnected from the party with whom we have been speaking. The warm, gracious words of appreciation and cordiality suddenly lose their meaning and the futility of thanks, when no one hears, is impressed upon one's mind. A quick word from his neighbor, however, assures this individual that his expression of thanks has been heard and appreciated. With this assurance the personal relationship implied in the words of thanksgiving is made a great reality.

The popular philosophies of our day would make our prayer of thanksgiving an utterly futile thing, were it not for the fact that we can say, with the great apostle, "I know whom I have believed."

"Now thank we all our God with heart and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things hath done, in whom His world rejoices;
Who from our mother's arms hath blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love, and still is ours today." [43]

[42] I John 3:1, 2. [43] An old English hymn.

CHAPTER VI

ADORATION

Prayer of Worship

"Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord! Praise ye the Lord!" [1]

The Problem

We are quickly brought to the heart of the problem of the type of prayer discussed in this chapter by the incident recorded in the fourteenth chapter of Mark's Gospel, verses 3-9, R. V. Jesus is sitting at meat in the house of Simon, the leper, when there comes a woman who anoints His head with extremely costly ointment. "But there were some that had indignation among themselves, saying, To what purpose hath this waste of the ointment been made? For this ointment might have been sold for above three hundred shillings, and given to the poor. And they murmured against her. But Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? She hath wrought a good work on me. For ye have the poor always with you, and whensoever ye will ye can do them good; but me ye have not always. She hath done what she could; she hath anointed my body beforehand for the burying. And verily, I say unto you, Wheresoever the gospel shall be preached throughout

[1] Psalm 150 : 6.

the whole world, that also which this woman hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."

The act of worship of this poor woman will not be greatly appreciated by those who call themselves practical-minded men. So far as the material world is concerned, this act consumed economic value, without producing economic goods.

The story is told of an extremely matter-of-fact individual who was persuaded by his friends to read a very beautiful poem. He read it dutifully, and stupidly asked the question, "What does it prove?" The philosopher Hegel is said to have been bored by a visit to the Alps. Some one asked him, "But do not the mountains speak to you?" He replied that all that the mountains said to him was, "Das ist so!" Here are the mountains, the rocks, the forests, the snow, the ice, and what of it?

The question of beauty in church architecture, in sacred music, in forms of worship, and in sacraments, is a question which demands an emotional rather than a matter-of-fact reply. A group of faithful women meet together, from week to week, to pray and worship the holy name of their Saviour. Their pitiful little service is sneered at by the business world. It seems to stir no multitudes, to build no buildings; in short, to accomplish nothing. It is easier for us to understand some of the other types of prayer than to understand the problem of worship. Is the adoration of our God and Saviour a suitable activity for a practical man of affairs?

The problem of worship has its parallels. We may ask: Is it suitable for a man to laugh, for a child to sing, for a friend to show heartiness and

affection? The answer to all these questions is that any display of emotion in our relationship with God or man is foolish, even silly, if it is not prompted by a genuine, inward experience. When the inward experience is genuine, however, the expression of it, in the adoration of God and the love of friends, intensifies and crystallizes it. The pouring out of expensive perfumes and ointments may be wasteful and meaningless in itself, but when a poor, oriental woman feels impelled to worship by such an act, we feel that the material could be put to no better use.

The Abundant Life as a Source

Many of the words of our Lord Jesus Christ are indicative of the inward experience which produces worship. "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." [2] "And this is life eternal, that they should know thee, the only true God, and him whom thou didst send, even Jesus Christ." [3] "But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." [4] Perhaps there is nothing more inane than a perpetual, frozen smile, but surely there is nothing more wholesome than the genuine smile of comradeship. If our expressions of adoration and worship are forms only, they become childish, or ludicrous; but if they are genuine outpourings of our heart toward God, they are truly the highest form of human activity.

"How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of

[2] John 10:10.
[3] John 17:3, R.V.
[4] John 4:14.

hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. . . . . For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness." [5]

Praise Distinguished from Thanksgiving

The prayer of pure worship is closely allied with the type of prayer discussed in chapter five. Perhaps the distinction may be made clear by the incident of the healing of the lame man, as recorded in the third chapter of Acts. It went far beyond the giving of thanks; for we read, "And he, leaping up, stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, *walking, and leaping, and praising God!* And all the people saw him walking and praising God!" Thanksgiving goes beyond itself and becomes emotional, even ecstatic, in its expression. In thanksgiving we rejoice in the gift; in adoration we rejoice in the giver Himself.

Conditions to Be Met

Our position in Christ is distinctly described in Scripture as the basis of our praise toward God: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; *that ye should shew forth the praises* of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." [6] Our rejoicing, not in any gift of God, but in God Himself, is only possible through our Lord Jesus Christ; for it

[5] See Psalm 84. [6] I Peter 2:9.

is through Him that we have received reconciliation to God.[7]

In the magnificent antiphonal choruses of the Revelation, the saving work of our Lord Jesus Christ is set forth as the basis of praise. "And they sing a new song, saying, Worthy art thou to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests; and they reign upon the earth." [8]

Special Work of the Holy Spirit

It is in His special work as "paraclete" that the Holy Spirit produces praise in our lives.[9] Jesus said, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter (Paraclete) will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." The meaning of the word "paraclete" has been discussed by many devout writers. When the Holy Spirit, in His office as helper, companion, guide, admonisher, comforter, teacher,—for all these meanings are implied in this word—when He is given right of way in the Christian's life, there is an overflowing abundance of spiritual joy which manifests itself in praise and worship.

Analysis of Adoration

The type of prayer now under discussion is *personal.* Men have always found it impossible to

[7] Romans 5:11.
[8] Revelation 5:9, 10, R.V.
[9] See John 14, 16 and 26; John 15:26; John 16:7.

worship and adore an abstract principle. Isaiah describes a scene of adoration, surpassing in its grandeur. "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is Jehovah of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory." [10] Every true Christian heart thrills at this description, and is moved to worship our holy God. Never could we find such a description of adoration if God were conceived of as an abstraction. Worship implies a personal relationship with God and our Saviour.

This type of prayer—adoration, or praise—is *rational* as well as personal. The forty-seventh Psalm is an example of almost ecstatic expression of worship. The ecstasy of this godly praise is never frenzied or wild, however. The high point in the Psalm is reached in verse 7, "Sing ye praises *with understanding*."

We are much afflicted just now with the insane, unchristian, frenzied emotionalism which characterizes the "tongues" movement. Certainly this thing, as judged by scriptural standards, is not of the Lord. Paul writes to the Corinthians,[11] "I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all; yet in the church I had rather speak five words *with my understanding*, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown

[10] Isaiah 6:1-3, R.V.

[11] I Corinthians 14:18.

tongue." Irrational ecstasy is not a part of Christian worship.

When all is said, however, prayer of adoration is frankly *emotional.* The Lord's word is, "I will make them *joyful in my house of prayer.*" [12] Joy is an emotion of which we have no reason to be ashamed. James says, "Is any cheerful? Let him sing praise." [13] The Christian life is not all solemnity and austerity. It is frankly and wholesomely *glad.*

We must say, however, that the *personal* and the *rational* qualities of praise modify its *emotional* character. The fact that the person of God is objectively real makes our emotion in worship a rational or intelligible thing. Ours is not the emotion of artificial stimulants, nor that of subjective hallucination. It were silly to be glad in religious activity if there is no Person with whom we may commune and of whom we may intelligently think. Our experience in Christ is *true.* Let us adore His name with rejoicing.

A salesman, selling fire-proof paint, is said to have told one of his prospective customers that a barn on a neighboring farm had been painted with this wonderful fire-resisting substance. After a few days this barn burned down, but the paint was left standing, and it served as a perfectly good barn. Personally, I must confess that I doubt the truth of this story. I also doubt the validity of the modern anti-intellectual appeal of liberal mysticism.[14] I do not believe that a building could burn down and leave any kind of paint standing. I do not believe

[12] Isaiah 56 : 7.
[13] James 5 : 13, R.V.
[14] See Machen's *What Is Faith,* especially Chapter I.

that the gospel could make us glad if we ceased to regard it as true. The joy of the adoration of the name of our Saviour is not a passing thrill. It is an intelligible and permanent motive of life for time and for eternity.[15] One will find special blessing in reading the ecstatic songs of praises with which the Revelation is filled.

"Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!
Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee;
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty,
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!"

[15] For further scriptural examples of praise and adoration see: David praises God (I Chronicles 29:10-13). The Ark placed in the Temple (II Chronicles 5:13). Praise in battle (II Chronicles 20:21). Hezekiah (II Chronicles 29:30). Foundation of second Temple (Ezra 3:11). The triumphal entering of Jerusalem (John 12:12, 13). Praise in the early church (Acts 2:46, 47). The lame man (Acts 3:8). Paul and Silas (Acts 16:25). Praise in the millennium (Isaiah 60:18; Jeremiah 17:26; 33:11; Habakkuk 3:3; Revelation 4 and 5).

CHAPTER VII

DEDICATION

Prayer of Enlistment for Service

"I HEARD the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me." [1]

The secular word "dedication" is used in this chapter in place of the religious word "consecration" for two reasons. In the first place, an unusual word sometimes commands our attention more forcefully; and secondly, the word "dedication" seems more specific.

The Problem a Priori

The first problem which confronts us in the study of prayer of dedication is one of theory. How is it possible that man can give anything to God? If God is absolute, how can we, in any way, enter into His plan by voluntary giving or serving?

The problem of the absoluteness of God is an old one. Clement of Alexandria, who surely was a Christian, and yet whose mind had many pagan reactions in it, describes the absoluteness of God as "a point"; but since a point is related to space in that it possesses the one characteristic of position, we must think of the absoluteness of God in terms of "a point without position." Men have always stumbled at the

[1] Isaiah 6:8.

thought of the relationship between infinite Deity and the practical affairs of the world. The question is frequently asked in our day: If God is infinite in all His perfection, how can He care for aught that we may do or refuse to do? How can we pray the prayer of dedication without limiting our thought of God?

It would seem that the answer to this question is to be found in frankly rejecting the thought of infiniteness, or absoluteness, or changelessness as constituted by, or implying *unrelatedness*. We must think of these characteristics of Deity as constituted rather by an absolutely complete relativity to all things past, present, and future, in the real universe. God is infinite and immutable; not in that He is unmoved by our griefs, but in that He is always consistently moved by them; not in that He cares not for our lost condition, but in that, from all eternity, He has consistently planned for our redemption. The absolute Allah of Mohammedanism says, "These are in the fire, and I care not; these are in the garden, and I care not." The absolute Jehovah, the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, says, "I have spread out my hands all the day unto a rebellious people, that walk in a way that is not good, after their own thoughts."[2] God's *immutability* consists in His eternal, absolutely perfect, and consistent *relativity* to all the realities of the world.

There is a very real sense in which the work of God is always complete; that is to say, He knows the end from the beginning. Christ was able to say just before Calvary, "I have overcome the world."[3]

[2] Isaiah 65:2, R.V. [3] John 16:33.

In His high-priestly prayer He said, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." [4] On the cross He said, "It is finished." [5]

In another sense, however, the work of our Lord is never finished; for He said, "As thou didst send me into the world, even so sent I them into the world." [6] Paul says of himself and Apollos, "We are God's fellow-workers." [7] From this point of view God's work is always left unfinished for us to carry on. Someone has very beautifully said, "God left the wood in the forest, intending that Stradivarius should make violins. He left the pure white marble in the hills, intending that Praxiteles should carve beautiful statuary." We do indeed look forward to that great consummation of all the ages, when God "shall be all in all"; but we believe that even in the new heaven and the new earth there will be much for us to do, for "his servants *shall serve him;* and they shall see his face." [8]

The theoretical problem is sometimes stated from another point of view. We know ourselves to be sinners, helpless and hopeless without Christ our Saviour. How can we, in our hopelessly indebted state, render anything to God, our Creator and Redeemer? I believe that the answer to this question is found in the conditions for this type of prayer laid down in the Scriptures.

Conditions to Be Met

Pythagoras cried, "Give me whereon to stand, and I will move the world." It is impossible for one

[4] John 17 : 4.
[5] John 19 : 30.
[6] John 17 : 18, R.V.
[7] I Corinthians 3 : 9, R.V.
[8] Revelation 22 : 3, 4, R.V.

who is upon the world, and a part of its physical system, to move it, for every action has its equal and opposite reaction. Pythagoras' desire was impractical, impossible. It is possible, however, for a man to find a solid foundation upon the earth, and to take the materials and forces of the world and to build with them.

Similarly, if we conceive of prayer of dedication as adding anything to the universe of God, or moving it out of its course, we conceive of the impossible; but if we understand this type of prayer as an act of building upon the foundation which God has given us in Jesus Christ, we have, I believe, a real insight into the situation. A foundation on which to stand is precisely what we need in order to give anything back to God. The psalmist asks the question, "What shall I render unto Jehovah for all his benefits?" The question is answered in his next verse, "I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of Jehovah."[9] It is only as we accept salvation from the Lord that we can call upon His name or render to Him our gifts and our services.

This problem of the *basis* of dedication is most clearly set forth in Paul's letter to the Corinthians: "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. But if any man buildeth on the foundation gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, stubble; each man's work shall be made manifest; for the day shall declare it, because it is revealed in fire; and the fire itself shall prove each man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work shall abide which he built thereon, he shall re-

[9] Psalm 116:12, 13, R.V.

ceive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved; yet so as through fire." [10]

The Problem in Experience

Why does the infinite God not provide more means and more workers? Why does He wait for human helpers?

Those who "fight the good fight with all their might," strained beyond human endurance in the Christian warfare, physically and mentally exhausted, are peculiarly likely to be tempted to criticize God for the lack of means and for the lack of cooperation in their work. It is hard for us to understand why the money and the friends are not more plentiful.

Some one has very well said that Christian means of financing Christian work are not to be regarded as man's way of raising money, but as God's way of raising men. God could open a mine of gold for every Christian college, school, church, or mission, but He does not choose to do so. He has planned a finite world of definite and limited spheres of action. How strange it is that He has so arranged the universe that practically one-third of our time must be spent in the unconsciousness of sleep, and one-eighth of our time in the preparation and consumption of fuel for our bodies! How we chafe at these limitations. Why has God not given us twenty-four hours of the day in which to serve Him in conscious activity?

[10] I Corinthians 3 : 11-15, R.V.

Why must faith missionaries nearly starve and sometimes die of disease for lack of houses and the needed furloughs? Why must students be turned away from Christian colleges and missionary schools? God has made a world in which His desire for mankind may be frustrated; a world in which His Son may be spat upon and crucified. Why does not God write the gospel in blazing letters across the sky and command the angelic hosts to proclaim the good news to every creature?

There are two conflicting views of the process of history held by devout Christian people. According to the one view this is an age of failure, developing toward an age of success. God is gradually coming into the control of human affairs through the agencies for the propagation of the gospel. If this view of things be true, I find no answer to our question. If the preaching of the gospel will one day win the world for Christ, what has God been doing all through the ages past?

According to the other view, the present age is one of grace, one of *waiting* on God's part. He, the infinite Mind of the universe, is working out here a process in terms of time and space limitations. "He left not himself without witness." [11] He is now waiting for men to repent, and out of the heat of the fiery process of history He is making for Himself a people like pure gold tried in the fire.

Here we have a ready answer to our question. This life is a process in which we are to learn to trust in God and do His will. It does not so much matter what we have, but what we do with what we have.

[11] Acts 14:17.

Our life may be compared with a handicap race. Our Heavenly Father knows exactly the burden which each one bears. The question, then, is not so much one of outward accomplishment as one of faithfulness. If God chooses to work out His process of saving souls in a little old store building rather than in a great cathedral, we must learn to be faithful in such a building and trust Him for equipment and results. If God chooses to work out the problem of distinctly Christian education in terms of small salaries, limited financial resources, and much personal sacrifice, we must learn to be faithful under these circumstances, "not despising the day of small things," and trusting Him for larger facilities when His time comes.

Special Work of the Holy Spirit

The Epistle to the Hebrews [12] indicates that it is through the Holy Spirit that our Lord Jesus Christ offered Himself as a sacrifice. We are led to understand that it is through the Holy Spirit that we also offer ourselves unto God. "But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." [13] We are taught that our very bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit. It is through His activity that the sanctifying work of Christ is applied to our souls. Paul pleads with the Corinthians for purity of life on this ground. "Know ye not that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have from God? Ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body." [14]

[12] Hebrews 9:13, 14.
[13] I Corinthians 6:17.
[14] I Corinthians 6:19, R.V.

We understand, therefore, that it is the special work of the Holy Spirit to dwell in us, filling our minds and our affections and perfecting in us the likeness of Christ. He it is who casts out those things which are displeasing to our Lord. It is "through the eternal Spirit" that we are enabled to offer ourselves unto God.

Word Study

There are eight great words in the Scriptures translated "dedicate," "consecrate," or "sanctify." A careful study of these words will reward us richly. There is, first of all, the word *nazar*, which means: to separate. It is the word from which the word "Nazarite" is derived, and implies our separation from sin.[15] Another word, *quadhash*, means: to set apart, as for a particular purpose. The prayer of dedication implies that we are set apart for God.[16] A third word, *charam*, means: to devote, usually implying devoting to death.[17] This word describes the devotion of evil things to death for the glory of God; and also describes the devotion of gifts to the Lord. It reminds us of the word of Christ, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself

[15] People separated from sin (Leviticus 15:31). Priests separated from sin (Leviticus 22:2, 3). The Nazarite vow (Numbers 6:1-3). Idolaters separated from God (Ezekiel 14:7, 8; Hosea 9:10).

[16] Things set apart by God for His own glory (Genesis 2:3; Exodus 19:13; Zechariah 8; 3; Psalm 2:6; Joshua 5:15; 6:19). Things set apart by men for the glory of God (Leviticus 27:14; II Chronicles 2:4; 31:6; Joel 1:13, 14). Men setting themselves apart for the glory of God (Joshua 7:13; II Chronicles 29:5). Men set apart by God for His own glory (Exodus 28:3; 29:44).

[17] Property devoted to the Lord (Leviticus 27:21; Numbers 18:14). Devoting is a binding act (Leviticus 27:28, 29). Evil devoted (destroyed) for the glory of God (Micah 4:13).

and take up his cross (expecting to be crucified) daily, and follow me." [18] A fourth word which must be studied in connection with prayer of dedication is *egkainizo*, which means: to make new.[19] Surely that which is dedicated to the Lord is made new in His service. One of the most striking expressions is found in the two words *mala yadh*, which means: to fill the hand.[20] The priests stood before the altar, and their hands were filled with the sacrifice which they were to offer. In this way they were consecrated to the Lord. Surely we are enabled to dedicate ourselves to the Lord because of the atonement of our Lord Jesus Christ. In another connection those are said to be consecrated to the Lord whose hands are filled with weapons for righteous warfare. From a sixth word, *chanach*, we derive the suggestion of training, for Christian service. Abraham's servants are said to be trained, or dedicated.[21] Our consecration of ourselves to the service of the Lord must be a constant and systematic activity. We enlist in His service and He puts us through a course of training under His divine discipline.

One of the most significant New Testament words to be studied in connection with dedication is the

[18] Luke 9:23.

[19] The old covenant dedicated (made new) with blood (Hebrews 9:18-22; 10:19, 20; Romans 6:4; 6:11-13; I Corinthians 5:7; II Corinthians 5:17). The new covenant dedicated with blood.

[20] Hands filled with the atonement; priestly garments (Exodus 28:41). The priest's hands filled with a sacrifice (Exodus 29:24, 25). Hands filled with a weapon (Exodus 32:26-29; Judges 7:16; Ephesians 6:10-12). When we are dedicated, or consecrated, to the Lord our hands are filled, by His grace, with atonement toward God and equipment for service toward men.

[21] Dedication of a house (Deuteronomy 20:5; Psalm 30 title). Dedication of the altar of the Tabernacle (Numbers 7:10, 11, 84, 88). Dedication of Solomon's Temple (II Chronicles 7:5; I Kings 8:63). Dedication of altar of Solomon's Temple (II Chronicles 7:9). Dedicated (trained) servants (Genesis 14:14).

word *'agiazo*, which means: to set aside as holy. This word is quite similar to the Hebrew word *qadhash*.[22] The word *teleo*, which means: to make perfect, does not imply that we become perfect in an absolute sense in this life. It is translated "consecrate." It may well be translated "mature." [23] We grow in maturity and we shall be made perfect when we see Him as He is.[24]

The Motives of Enlistment for Service

There are three distinct reasons for our self-dedication to the Lord's work. In the first place, our Lord Jesus Christ has commanded us. His word, "Go ye therefore," is not to be treated lightly. Paul tells us [25] that it is the eternal purpose of God that Christ should be "the first born among many brethren." One fears that the greatest order ever issued by "the Captain of our salvation" is being very lightly treated by many so-called "soldiers of the cross."

The second motive for Christian service is the great happiness which this type of activity brings to us. "In thy presence is fulness of joy: at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore." A great missionary in Korea was once asked why he devoted

[22] God's holiness imparted to us through the incarnation (Hebrews 2:10, 11). God's holiness imparted to us through the atonement (Hebrews 9:13, 14; 10:10). We must enter into God's plan for our sanctification (Hebrews 13:12-14; Philippians 3:10-14).

[23] This word, which is translated "consecrate," does not imply that we become perfect in an absolute sense in this life, but it does imply that we grow to greater maturity. We shall be made sinless when the Lord returns and "we shall see him as he is" (Hebrews 7:28; 7:19; 10:11-18; I Corinthians 4:7; II Corinthians 4:7).

[24] Hebrews 7:28; 7:19; 10:11-18; I Corinthians 4:7; II Corinthians 4:7; see also I John 3:2.

[25] Romans 8:29.

his life to the preaching of the gospel to the heathen. His reply was significant: "There's no fun like fishing." A gushing little person once said to a noted missionary, "Sir, you are making a tremendous sacrifice!" The missionary heartily replied, "Madam, I am having the time of my life." The joy of preaching the gospel to those who are hungry to hear it is something which must be experienced to be understood. One feels that his own experience in Christ and the clear gospel message about this experience is such good news that it must be published from the housetops. One is convinced that he has a message from the Lord and must deliver it, at all cost.

A third motive for Christian service is our clear responsibility for those who have not had an adequate understanding.[26] The question of the unevangelized is one which is much discussed. Our Lord has said, "He that is not against us is for us," [27] and "He that is not with me is against me." [28] It seems to me very wrong to quote one of these passages without the other. These two statements are equivalent to a statement that there is no middle ground. Every man must either accept or reject the Lord Jesus Christ. The fact that we cannot tell whether some are for Christ, or against Him, does not alter the fact that, before God, every man must come to one position or the other.

The question follows, however: Are there not many who have no adequate understanding of Christ, not only in heathen lands, but in our own country? In

[26] The following discussion is found in part in my article in the *Bibliotheca Sacra*, October, 1925, p. 44 ff.

[27] Mark 9:40, R.V.
[28] Luke 11:23.

answer to this question we may safely make four statements from the Scripture, which, taken together, give, I believe, a reasonable answer:

(1) No one can escape eternal punishment without faith in Christ. "For other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ." [29] "And in none other is there salvation; for neither is there any other name under heaven, that is given among men, wherein we must be saved." [30]

(2) One may accept Christ in other terms than those usually employed by the Christian organized church. "(Christ is) the true light . . . . *which lighteth every man*, coming into the world." [31] "But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, which art little to be among the thousands of Judah, out of thee shall one come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting." [32] "The heavens declare the glory of God: and the firmament sheweth his handiwork. . . . . There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard." [33]

Who can deny that the "voice" which spoke to Socrates may have been the Son of God, the second person of the eternal Trinity, "whose goings forth are from of old"?

(3) All men have enough light so that they are without excuse before God, if they do not accept Christ in some terms. "For the invisible things of him since the creation of the world are clearly seen, being perceived through the things that are made, even his

[29] I Corinthians 3 : 11, R.V.
[30] Acts 4 : 12, R.V.
[31] John 1 : 9, R.V.
[32] Micah 5 : 2, R.V.
[33] Psalm 19 : 1, 3.

everlasting power and divinity; that they may be *without excuse.*" [34] "So belief cometh of hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ. But I say, Did they not hear? Yea, verily, their sound went out into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world." [35]

(4) God takes account of the ignorance of the unevangelized by putting the responsibility for that ignorance where it belongs. "The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked." [36] "So thou, son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die, and thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way; that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, *but his blood will I require at thy hand.*" [37]

I believe Paul must have had this passage from Ezekiel in mind when he said to the Ephesian elders, "Wherefore I testify unto you this day, that I am pure from the blood of all men. For I shrank not from declaring unto you the whole counsel of God." [38] Something of this kind may also have been in his mind when he wrote, "For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me; for woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel. For if I do this of mine own will, I have a reward; but if not of mine own will, I have a stewardship intrusted to me." [39] Again Paul wrote, "I am *debtor* both to Greeks and to Barbarians, both to the wise

[34] Romans 1 : 20, R.V.
[35] Romans 10 : 17, R.V.
[36] Acts 17 : 30, R.V.
[37] Ezekiel 33 : 7, R.V.
[38] Acts 20 : 26, R.V.
[39] I Corinthians 9 : 16, 17, R.V.

and to the foolish."[40] Christians are debtors to the unevangelized in the same sense in which the executor of a will is a debtor to the heirs as long as he holds their property from them. Will God eternally punish the heirs of His grace, merely because the executors of the testament neglected their trust? Evidently not. The unevangelized will evidently be saved or lost according as they accept or reject Christ ("the light which lighteth every man"), in the terms which they know. But *their blood will be required* at the hands of those who know the gospel and do not preach it. Non-missionary Christianity is not Christianity, and one who does not care to tell others about Christ simply does not belong to Christ, and will be held responsible before God for the spiritual poverty in the lives of those he should have reached with the gospel.

Our responsibility for those we might reach with the gospel, if Christian service were our supreme motive, is a necessary part of our Christian thinking. It makes God's plan seem just and reasonable. Duty, however, does not constitute our greatest reason for dedicating ourselves and our all to the Lord. The fact that He has commanded it, and that we find our greatest possible happiness in it, leads us to give all that we have, and all that we are, to the Christian enterprise. It is "the love of Christ" which "compels"[41] us.

> "Take my life, and let it be
> Consecrated, Lord, to Thee;
> Take my hands and let them move
> At the impulse of Thy love."

[40] Romans 1 : 14, R.V. [41] II Corinthians 5 : 14.

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